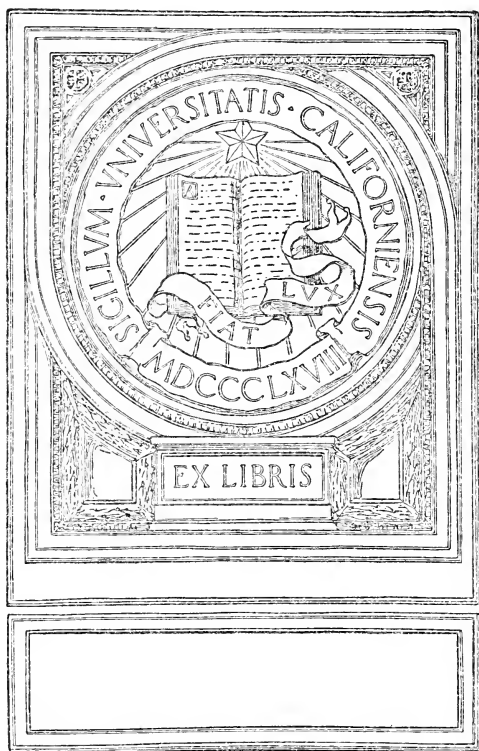


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JUST OFF THE AVENUE

OTHER PLAYS BY
CHARLES FREDERIC NIRDLINGER
(already published or now in press)

THE FIRST LADY OF THE LAND

THE WORLD AND HIS WIFE (FOUNDED
ON "EL GRAN GALEOTTO" OF ECHE-
GARAY)

THE CONSUL

WASHINGTON'S FIRST DEFEAT

THE RUN OF THE CARDS

SPANGLES

MARION DE LORME (AN ADAPTATION)

MORE THAN QUEEN (AN ADAPTATION)

MADAME POMPADOUR

THE SCANDAL AT BELCOURT'S

THE PARSON'S BALLET

THE POSTHUMOUS JEST OF DON MEN-
DOZA

AN AFTERNOON'S HONEYMOON

FOUR SHORT PLAYS

*Containing: Aren't They Wonders?, Look After
Louise, Big Kate, The Real People.*

JUST OFF THE AVENUE

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BY

CHARLES FREDERIC NIRDLINGER



NEW YORK
MITCHELL KENNERLEY
MCMXVII

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JUST OFF THE AVENUE

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS
AND
FOUR SCENES

ACT ONE	TWO SCENES
ACT TWO	ONE SCENE
ACT THREE	ONE SCENE

71233675

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

IN THE ORDER IN WHICH THEY FIRST SPEAK

TOM SAVILE

RHODA BROUGH

BRUCE VAUX

HIGGINS

MONTRESSOR WATTS

MR. GRIGGS

MR. SAVILE

HOMANS

THE POLICEMAN

MARIAN GRAY

JUST OFF THE AVENUE

ACT ONE

[SCENE ONE]

The scene is a sculptor's studio in the Washington Mews.

The room, lower at front than at back, has a beamed ceiling. It is furnished and appointed simply, but in perfect taste. The few pieces of furniture are notably fine antiques. There are several plaster casts standing about, some still in the making. The general effect, at a glance, shows that it is a sculptor's habitat, and not a painter's studio of the conventional sort.

A door at right leads to the hall-way: a door at left opens on a bed-room; this door is masked by a tall mirror, in tarnished gilt frame with top-piece.

Curtains — very dark purple or black, working on pulleys — and sliding-doors divide the two sections of the room. The up-stage section — the sculptor's work-room — has a skylight. At back are French windows, opening on a balcony.

Beneath the skylight stands an equestrian statue, of heroic size, of "Don Quixote." Platform and frame-work show that the statue is not yet completed. The statue is only partly in view at RISE OF CURTAIN, the curtains being drawn.

On a "dummy" is a woman's costume of Spain, period of 17th century: splendid in stuff and color.

A small "drop" or "flat" shows a number of wind-mills.

There is a fire-place, left, with a tea-kettle whistling on the crane; and stretched between the tall andirons some drying laundry: handkerchiefs, socks, white gloves, and a sculptor's blouse.

Tom Savile, a young, boyish-looking painter stands, right, at easel, engaged on picture of a "nude." He "visions" it from various angles, obviously dissatisfied with his work.

A suit-of-armor sits in loose, lounging attitude, and half-turned from audience, on a chair left: one hand rests in lap, holding a book.

TOM (to the suit-of-armor)

Not so bad, eh? (There is no answer) Little too — much — hip? H'm, h'm. (Puts brush to picture) That's better — (to armor) — don't you think? (No answer) (Rhoda's voice heard off from hall, with a cheery "Ho-ho!" of signal)

TOM (in same tone)

"Ho-ho!"

RHODA (at half-opened door)

Anything doing?

TOM (assenting, but not looking from his work)

Figure!

RHODA (closes door, but immediately reopens it)

No face? — shoulders? — neck?

TOM (same tone)

Figure!

RHODA (*repeats business at door*)

Hands? — feet? (*Extends, in turn, one of each*)

TOM (*in sing-song voice*)

Figure! To-day I'm doing only figure.

RHODA

Adios! Señor! (*Closes door with bang*)

TOM (*Rushes to open door, but finds it held fast*)

(*Calls over transom*) Come back, you monkey! —

The "old man" will be here presently. (*Rhoda re-enters*) I knew that would fetch you. (*Rhoda is*

about eighteen: pretty rather than beautiful. She has on a velvet Tam-o'-shanter hat: and over a black skirt and a shirt-waist of obvious cheapness — though of good "style" — she wears a costly fur-coat — a man's coat and much too large for her. Her loose tie is black, and on her arm is a mourning-band)

RHODA

Mr. Vaux won't want me till late.

TOM

What are you doing out at this hour?

RHODA

It's dull at the shop — and we're on half-time — most of us. — (*wistfully*) And I thought — maybe you might — (*Turns to go*)

TOM

Don't go! — Vaux may want you when he gets back. He's up at City Hall.

RHODA (*all alive*)

'Bout the statue?

TOM (*while working*)

Yes! — They'll accept it to-day — the Aldermen — or turn it down!

RHODA (*with meaning*)

Don't break your heart over it (*crosses her fingers*)
'cause he's — (*indicates statue*) — going to take
first prize! (*Thrusts her crossed fingers at him*)
First prize!

TOM

'Gainst those "wire-pullers"? Schnaubengigl —
Mulcahy — Goldoni, and that crowd? — Lucky if he
gets second prize — or a mention.

RHODA

He wouldn't accept it. (*Makes to go*)

TOM

Wait — and see!

RHODA

I shall! (*Notes the "laundry": throws off coat,
and, taking flat-iron from fire-place, begins to iron
handkerchiefs, etc.*) I've an hour or two — and if
you can't use me —

TOM (*invitingly*)

Figure, only!

RHODA

Tom Savile — don't your figures *ever* have a face?

TOM

O, I can *imagine* a face — (*Pokes at her features,
with his brush*) — a mouth — nose — pair of eyes.
— But when it comes to the — (*Indicates figure on
canvas*) — well, my art — all the *best* art — is from
Missouri.

RHODA

It should stay there — and never leave home and mother — like *that*. (*Nods to picture, 'cross her shoulder*) What do you call it?

TOM

“Purity” — (*Trying to get her to look*) — See if you don't think it suggests purity.

RHODA (*not looking up from her ironing*)

I'm sure it doesn't! — or you wouldn't have to *label* it. — In our grocery-department they only put the Pure Food labels on stuff that (*with gesture*) — just “gets by” the Board of Health. — And I don't believe *she* could even do that!

TOM

One of the girls from your shop “posed” it; but I don't like her lines.

RHODA (*with mingled humor and sympathy*)

Poor thing!

TOM

You think it's wrong?

RHODA (*promptly*)

No! — Not wrong — or all you nice chaps wouldn't be doing it.

TOM

Least of all, Rhoda, I wouldn't ask you to pose.

RHODA

Of course not. — I know that.

TOM

Old Vaux himself will tell you it's all right.

RHODA

He *has* told me — “old” Vaux — some of the very nicest girls in the world are models — for figure —

(*Tom nods "yes"*) — that he never knew one that wasn't a real lady — at heart — (*Tom nods "yes"*) — that it's *perfectly* all right to pose — and that I shouldn't do it!

TOM (*peevd*)

The old humbug!

RHODA (*off her guard*)

Shut up! — How old?

TOM

Old enough to be called a failure.

RHODA

I know some failures, 'round here, much younger than Mr. Vaux. — (*Flaring*) *Who* calls him a failure?

TOM

The men in his own line.

RHODA

Jealous!

TOM

Artists — "jealous"?

RHODA (*nods "yes"*)

Don't I hear our window-dressers — roast each other's display? (*Imitating*) "Great! — Yes! — *but* — a dead-steal from Altman's." — I'm no judge of art — except when I hear one of you fellows tell a friend: "that's the best thing you ever did!" — Then I know it's rotten!

TOM (*laughing*)

I'm not sure you'd do for an artist's wife.

RHODA

I'm sure — I *wouldn't*.

TOM

Still, I'm going to risk it, Rhoda — marry you.

RHODA (*with mock seriousness*)

Have you spoke to my family?

TOM (*laughing*)

No, but I've spoken to *mine* — told them I mean to marry you.

RHODA (*chaffingly*)

And you live to tell the tale? — Mr. Savile, you know so little of my people.

TOM

Nothing!

RHODA

They were *very* ambitious people — one of the *first* families of MacDougall's Alley; some of their old neighbors can tell you about them — specially 'bout father! — Lord, if he ever thought I'd marry a painter — son of a mere, every-day, common millionaire — and just now, when they're so *very* common!

TOM

But, Rhoda, this is serious,— really!

RHODA (*laughing*)

I'll bet it was serious, when you told father.

TOM

Why, girl, you know I'm mad about you! (*Trying to embrace her*)

RHODA (*drawing away*)

Go 'long, boy! — You're "mad" 'bout every girl comes here! You're what we call a — "steady fusser!" — the worst "fusser" in the Square. — You don't even pretend it's love — or poetry — or soul-

stuff you're after — to put into your work; you're just a — a regular Anarchist.

TOM

But I do care for you — you know that! — (*With every show of sincerity*) And I'm serious — terribly serious. (*Makes to put arm about her*)

RHODA (*holding hot iron toward him*)

Don't be! — Cause you're funny when you're serious — and serious only when you're funny — having a good-time — with the crowd — at Pedro's. — *Then* I like you!

TOM

Let's go to Pedro's! — Come on! (*She indicates "no"*) Or the Lafayette? (*She repeats "no"*) Well, it's something that you like me at all.

RHODA (*with coquetry*)

'Course I like you. — Couldn't help it — with Mr. Vaux always talking about you.

TOM (*lightly*)

The old man's some use!

RHODA (*assenting with a nod*)

For a — "failure." — He says you're the finest ever! — I don't know how he figures it out — but he certainly thinks so.

TOM

Then you'll think so, some day.

RHODA (*with coquetry*)

Perhaps.

TOM

And, then, of course, you'll marry me. (*Approaches her*)

RHODA

Rot, Tom Savile!

TOM

“Rot Tom”—?

RHODA (*crosses right — puts ironed 'kerchiefs on table*)

Yes, and Tommy-rot! — You must think I'm a fool to believe such — (*In surprise, lets drop the flat-iron*)

Why — Tom Savile! — You've been — (*Tries to seize the picture from easel*) (*Tom intervenes, laughing*) (*Pointing to face of picture*) That's me!

TOM (*with fervor*)

Of course it's you! How could I do any one else? — when I'm always thinking of you — dreaming — and mooning over you.— Who *should* I paint?

RHODA (*again trying to seize the picture*)

Your model! — paint your model! —

TOM

Whatever model I use, it's *your* face I see: you're always before me — on my palette — canvas — brushes! — Vaux will tell you —

RHODA

He's seen this?

TOM

What if he has? — What of it? Every painter does that with the woman he loves —

RHODA (*in fury*)

But you've no right! — He told me not to! And I don't believe he — He wouldn't allow you — (*Struggles to get at the picture, Tom holding her off with arm about her waist;— when there is a turmoil heard off at back: two or three voices; a cry of pain;*

and the stamp of horse-hoofs) (Enter Vaux, at back; aglow from his walk in the clear wintry day. Bizarre in his attire, and markedly picturesque in appearance. Moustachios and goatee like Don Quixote's in the usual pictures. Straight-rimmed silk hat; frock coat — bell-skirted — tight at waist; long cape, gloves with gauntlets; carries umbrella or stick as if it were a lance. Habitually wears a boutonniere) (Vaux's manner is that of a man who knows that people think him "strange," "queer," "not quite all-there"; but he knows better, and twinkles with enjoyment of their mistake) (Vaux pauses, between the curtains at back and speaks to some one off)

VAUX (*caressingly*)

Good girl, Cosie! — Good girl! — And serves you right, Jake! (*Change of tone*) The man who lays his hand on a woman save in the way of kindness is a — a — (*Rather to himself*) — wretch whom 'twere base flattery to name — a coward — (*With sympathy*) I'll send him down the liniment — (*Turns and sees Rhoda who has risen on his appearance*) (*He greets her with a sweeping, courtly bow*) (*Then takes a black-bottle from shelf; reads label*) "Good for man or beast" — that's it!

RHODA

I'll take it down.

VAUX

No, No! Just put it on the dumb-waiter. (*Bows her to left*) (*Rhoda exits*) (*After glance to make sure Rhoda is not in sight, he drops some coins into a*

beautiful vase on mantel; then places in vase two or three roses that he's brought in)

TOM

Who's hurt?

VAUX

Jake, the janitor.

TOM

Three cheers! — Who by?

VAUX

Cosie! — He struck and cursed her — as I came in. At sight of me he turned to explain and apologize and — (*Hesitates lest Rhoda hear*)

TOM (*jumping in, with glee*)

And Cosie kicked him — in the interim.

VAUX (*twinkling*)

If the interim is the broadest part of Jake's anatomy, that's where she kicked him.— (*Rhoda re-enters*)
(*A loud, rumbling voice heard off, from below:*
"Potztausend!" "Donnerwetter!" etc., etc.)

VAUX

Is that Cosie he's talking to? (*Makes to go*)

RHODA (*A woman's voice heard off, in vigorous retort*)

No! Gretchen, his wife.

VAUX (*relieved*)

O! — His wife can talk back, but our Cosie is — helpless. (*With fire*) How can one be rough to such a patient, gentle creature? — Why, just to look at her!

TOM

Cosie's not much to look at!

VAUX

All the more reason for kindness — and chivalry.

TOM (*through laughter*)

There you go!—"chivalry"—even to that wrack-of-bones!

VAUX (*as he shifts into place a "dummy" horse: scrawny, raw-boned, bob-tailed—a caricature of a horse*)

But her every bone for me—an inspiration! What Venus-Rising-from-the-Sea—(*Points to cast of "Venus"*)—was to Praxiteles—Cosie, rescued from the pedlar's-cart, is to my "Don Quixote." (*Indicates statue*) And when her work is done, she'll live in clover,—like all of us! (*Looks to Rhoda*)

RHODA (*eagerly*)

Have they took it?—at City Hall?

VAUX

No! but—

TOM

There *are* a chance?

VAUX (*assenting*)

My "Quixote" is one of the three designs from which they'll select, finally, the two prize-winners.

TOM

Who are your two rivals?

VAUX

Schnaubengigl and Goldoni.

RHODA

Foreigners, of course!

VAUX

But both great men!—And Art knows no country.—There were mobs of Schnaubengigl's countrymen at City Hall—and Goldoni's—to remind the aldermen.

TOM (*with laugh*)

You lose! (*Rhoda makes gesture of throwing flat-iron at him*)

TOM (*quickly*)

I mean only — what do they know of “Don Quixote” with his knight-errants and “chivalry”? — Most people now-a-days think him a “nut”!

VAUX (*assenting*)

God pity them! — (*Suddenly remembering that he is smoking*) (*To Rhoda*) I beg your pardon —

RHODA

I like a cigar —

VAUX

Thank you — but I suspect this isn't; it's a — (*Looks at band*) “Cachuca.” (*Throws it away*)

RHODA (*talking at Tom, who is puffing a cigarette*)

It can't be worse than some cigarettes.

TOM

Now, Vaux, put something like this — (*Points to his “nude”*) — on the horse — call it “Lady Godiva” — and you'll get somewhere.

VAUX

Thank you! Not with naked ladies!

TOM

You don't think it's art?

VAUX

Yes, yes — for artists!

TOM

But not for the public?

VAUX

When it comes to “Lady Godivas” — the public are mostly “Peeping Toms.”

VAUX (*to Higgins, the model, in suit-of-armor*)

Higgins! (*No response: Vaux shakes him, with no response except a snore*) Higgins! (*Louder*) Higgins! Engarde! (*Higgins jumps to his feet and lets book fall to floor*) Sorry to disturb you. (*Picks up fallen book*)

HIGGINS (*flustered*)

I — I — was reading “Don Quixote.”

VAUX (*looking at book*)

Yes, I heard you.—How far did you get with him?

HIGGINS

To the wind-mills — (*With gesture*) — I just got through fighting the wind-mills.

VAUX (*kindly*)

And, naturally, you were exhausted.

HIGGINS

He was himself — the book says —

VAUX

You’ve caught the spirit! — (*With fire*) Now, man, to horse! (*Higgins mounts the “studio” horse*)

VAUX (*to Rhoda*)

If you will, dear lady? — (*Points to “Dulcinea” costume on dummy*) (*Rhoda takes costume: goes behind screen, puts it on, reappears, and sits facing Higgins*)

VAUX (*gives Higgins a lance*)

Lance in rest! — Charge! — Rout the monsters! (*Vaux begins work on the plaster model of the statue, but stops at sight of Higgins’ awkward, lackadaisical pose, which he tries to “buck up” two or three times, with jabs and valiant words*) That wouldn’t rout them, Higgins! — Unhorse them!

HIGGINS (*perplexed*)

“Unhorse” wind-mills!

VAUX

You and I know they're wind-mills — but to Don Quixote they are living demons — cruel, merciless giants. He must conquer,— kill them — to save the world — (*Points to Rhoda*) — and win his Dulcinea. (*Eyes fixed on Rhoda*) Think — think of winning Dulcinea — for your very own!

HIGGINS (*naïvely*)

I've got a woman.

VAUX (*with stamp of foot*)

That word, Higgins! How often must I tell you? —

You're not in the vein to-day! — And I don't know what more I can do, to put you in the spirit of Quixote — and keep you there! — You have a horse — (*Indicates the wooden, “studio-horse”*) — a fiery, prancing steed — or as near a horse as may be, when we can't work out-doors. — You have the wind-mills Quixote rode against. — (*Indicates the “scene-piece” of wind-mills*) You have his helmet, shield and lance — or quite as good as his — and you have here — looking up into your eyes — a Dulcinea such as any Knight would die for!

HIGGINS

Maybe — if I had a drink —

VAUX (*in despair*)

Ah! That's where your mind is — not wind-mills — gin-mills! (*Takes lance from Higgins*) No more to-day, Higgins! — Take them off. — (*Indicates coat-of-mail*) (*To Rhoda*) We'll stop, Miss Brough. (*Rhoda goes behind screen to remove costume*)

HIGGINS (*plaintively, as he removes armor*)

But, Mr. Vaux —

VAUX (*shakes his head "no"*)

HIGGINS (*gloomily*)

I counted on these two hours.

VAUX

You're not in the mood.

HIGGINS

I'm out of money, Mr. Vaux.

VAUX

That you shall have — (Makes to take coins from pocket, or desk)

HIGGINS (*declining*)

Without earning it?

VAUX

Certainly not! — Take Cosinante for a walk — 'round the Square; — let her gaze on the battle-arch; then over to the Avenue, under the "L" — as the trains thunder by; — and where they're blasting for the sub-way! So she gets the smell of powder, the roar and boom of battle! — She'll "pose" the better, for it — and you, too! (*During the above speech, Vaux has placed a cheval-mirror before him, and makes ready to work on the statue with himself as model*) (*Higgins takes off the helmet, and shows himself clean-shaven*)

VAUX (*in dismay*)

Higgins! What have you done with your face?
(*Indicates moustache and goatee*)

HIGGINS (*feels for his moustache and goatee: panicky*)

The barber — the barber — *he* did it!

VAUX (*distressed*)

What were you thinking of! — We had you trained to a hair! (*Pulls at his moustache*) And Cosie had come to know you — even with visor down! — She'd never get used to you *this* way!

HIGGINS

Well, my wom — (*Correcting at a glance from Vaux*) — my lady — couldn't get used to me *that* way. (*Pulls at imaginary goatce*)

VAUX

Ah, your wife?

HIGGINS (*sniffing*)

Yes, — Mr. Vaux, she's kind o' superstitious about my face: says goatees are unlucky. — I told her you'd be angry —

VAUX

"Angry"? — Delighted, Higgins, — that you bow to your lady's caprice. Quixote would have done the same. — (*Soothingly*) We'll find something else for you —

RHODA (*from behind screen*)

Mr. Wills, the floor below, is doing some Apollos — for a health-belt poster —

VAUX (*to Tom*)

Speak a good word for Higgins — you know Wills. (*Tom exits*) (*To Higgins*) See him, later — when you've brought Cosie home. — (*Takes a pair of horse-blinders from the studio-horse*) And I'll put these blinders on her — so she won't see you full-face. — She's high-strung — and if she missed the — (*Gestures moustache and goatce*) (*Exits*)

HIGGINS (*to Rhoda, still behind screen*) (*Confidentially*)

I've got something good —

RHODA (*interrupting*)

Not to-day — it's my rent-day.

HIGGINS

But this is *sure* — absolutely sure!

RHODA

No! — I must pay my rent —

HIGGINS

It's a crime — to pay rent — with this tip — straight from the stable.

RHODA

No!

HIGGINS

And first time out!

RHODA

No! No! — What track? Mexico?

HIGGINS

No! You can't get the "dope" on Mexico. — One day they're out for Villa, the next for Carranza. — This is Pimlico — third race — and *absolutely sure!*

RHODA (*with finality*)

No! No! No! — What odds?

HIGGINS

Fifty — twenty — and five to show. — And it's criminal —

RHODA

So are the odds! — (*Comes from behind screen*)
What's the horse?

HIGGINS

“You’re a Dog-gone Dangerous Girl” — (*Rhoda looks incredulous*) That’s her name!

RHODA

That explains the odds.— Here! (*Gives him some money*) (*He makes a wry face*) All I can spare, to-day. (*Takes up her fur coat*)

HIGGINS

You could make a killing — with that coat.

RHODA (*shocked*)

Sell it?

HIGGINS

No! — Hock it!

RHODA

In this weather! — What a chance!

HIGGINS

It’s a crime to lose the chance! — You could burn-up the book-makers with it.

RHODA

And freeze *me* without it.

HIGGINS

You’d have it back, after the race.— It’s a crime not to —

RHODA

No!

HIGGINS

The third race only — and they start early at Pimlico. I’ll fetch your coat when I go for mine.

RHODA

No, Higgins.— That’s all I risk —

HIGGINS (*almost tearfully*)

It's a crime — crime! — crime! — not to plunge on that horse — You're robbing your children — some day.

RHODA (*taking coins from handkerchief*)

Well, here's two more — on "You're Dog-gone Dangerous" horse!

HIGGINS

I'll play her for "show."

RHODA

No, no — play her for excitement; fifty-to-one! — What good's five-to-one, on a two dollar bet? (*Re-enter Vaux: in season to see Higgins stuff the money into his pocket*)

HIGGINS (*taking a cigar from box on table*)

May I, Mr. Vaux?

VAUX

Certainly! — (*Quickly*) But you're walking-out with the horse! — Get a real cigar — (*Gives him a coin*) Corona or Romeo. — Cosie doesn't like these — (*Indicates box*) — "Cachucas" — I've smoked them, once or twice, in her presence — and she bucked!

HIGGINS (*makes to put cigar in pocket*)

I'll smoke it at home.

VAUX

Before your wife! (*Takes cigar from Higgins and throws it in box*) (*Higgins makes to exit*) (*Tom re-enters*)

TOM (*to Higgins*)

Mr. Wills wants to know what weight.

HIGGINS (*his mind on the race*)

Only eighty-five pounds — by the *Morning Tele* — I'll tell him — (*Makes to rush out*)

VAUX (*calling after*)

Your over-coat, Higgins! —

HIGGINS

I left it up-town.

VAUX

It's bitter cold, out.

HIGGINS

I'll get my coat, later. (*Turns his coat-collar up*)

VAUX

Meanwhile, you'd best wear mine. (*Points to his over-coat on rack*)

HIGGINS (*eagerly*)

Yes, that would be — (*Starts to put on Vaux's coat*) (*Rhoda hums: "You're a Dog-gone Dangerous Girl"*) No,—that would be a crime—in this weather! (*Exits quickly*) (*Rhoda approaches Tom's canvas, ominously*) (*Tom resumes work at easel, to ward her off*)

VAUX

Miss Brough — pardon, if I seem impertinent — Higgins, I know is often in straits — but, surely, you've nothing to spare —

RHODA (*flustered*)

No, no — that was for — well, you see — Higgins does some little — commissions — for me, now and then, and I —

VAUX

I beg your pardon — and *his*. (*As Rhoda makes to exit*) My dear lady — (*Bows toward a vase in which are two roses — and some coins*) — there's a rose due you — and — (*Shakes his finger reprovingly*) — for your previous visit also! — Two

hours. (*She takes the roses and some coins from the vase; ties coins into corner of her handkerchief and bursts into laughter*)

VAUX

Yes, it is ridiculous: such pittance for the priceless service you do me! No wonder you laugh!

RHODA (*still laughing*)

I'm laughing because — well, I come here and have the time of my life and get paid for it! (*Exits with bow to Vaux, but ignoring Tom*) (*A slight, silent pause: Tom staring at the door that closed on Rhoda; Vaux engaged on his work*)

TOM

Bah! (*Throwing his brush across the room*)
What's the use — of paint, if you haven't — genius.

VAUX

But you don't know you haven't — until you've failed — and know you have failed. (*Takes Savile's palette and brush; "dabs" his canvas*)

TOM (*meanly*)

And when you know that, you're forty! (*Crosses to fire-place*)

VAUX (*at work on Savile's picture*)

Yes, but meanwhile, you've had the joy of *trying*. — Make the most of what you have! — fight your best with what you have! — as *he* did! — (*Nods to "Quixote"*) His helmet a copper dish-pan: his coat-of-mail — forged from old well-chains: his leg-greaves, a couple of stove-pipes from the junk-shop: his unvanquished lance he cut himself from a sturdy oak — and poor Cosinante, who bore him victor in a hundred battles — he got her — in the nick of

time — from the sausage-makers. (*Turning from canvas*) There! That's better.

TOM (*re-crosses to easel*) (*angrily*)

Why, you've changed — *taken out* — the face — (*Seizes brush and palette from Vaux*)

VAUX (*kindly*)

Yes, and you *keep* it out!

TOM (*impudently*)

Will I? (*Starts to paint*)

VAUX (*with vehemence*)

Or get out! (*With gesture*)

TOM (*beaten, but rather bewildered by Vaux's outburst*)

If Rhoda doesn't mind, I don't see why you — (*Vaux glares at him*) — but, of course, if you feel that way! (*Puts down brush and palette*)

VAUX (*gently*)

You will, too — when you're forty! — You love Miss Brough, don't you? —

TOM

Rhoda? Of course!

VAUX

Want to make her your wife?

TOM

What's that to do with —? (*Points to picture*) Plenty men — *great* artists — have "done" the women they married.

VAUX

But they didn't think *then* they were going to marry. They'd tell you so — the best of them — in their cups — or the twilight.

TOM (*sulky*)

You ought to be a monk, Vaux — not an artist!

VAUX (*pleasantly*)

Perhaps I'm not! Cheer up! — till we hear from the Aldermen — what they think of me. (*Goes up stage: works on the statue*) (*Tom drops cover over his canvas: cleans brushes, etc.*) (*Enter Montressor Watts: a typical literary hack; in the thirties: "seedy" in dress, rather alcoholic in color; slightly bald: long drooping moustache. He opens the door cautiously: sees Vaux absorbed in work, tiptoes to Tom, so as not to be seen by Vaux*)

WATTS (*sotto-voce, almost pantomime*)

How is he — (*Indicates Vaux*) — calm? or — "touchy"?

TOM

Watts! Are you *always* broke?

WATTS

No, no! — His mood, I mean — his mood: is he — receptive?

TOM (*frowns and shakes his head vigorously: "No, no"*) (*sotto-voce*)

Trouble with Higgins! (*gestures distraction*) All upset.

WATTS (*tiptoes quickly to the door, where he motions some one back, then gum-shoes up stage, and stands back of Vaux, as if admiring his work. Vaux sees him in the mirror and turns*)

VAUX

Good-afternoon, Watts.

WATTS (*urging him to resume work*)

Go on! go on! while the frenzy is with you — unless you can spare —

VAUX (*interrupting, as he makes to take money from pocket*)

Certainly —

WATTS (*jumping in*)

No, no — a moment's all I want — if you can spare a moment — (*Takes folded newspaper from breast-pocket, opens it and hands to Vaux*) Possibly, though, you've seen this —

VAUX (*with delight and surprise*)

Your portrait?

WATTS (*assenting*)

In every morning-paper — to-day! — And the *Evening Post*!

VAUX

You are getting on! (*Reads, through a single-glass*) “Interview with the famous writer, Montessor Watt” — (*Pats Watts on shoulder, approvingly*) Ah! talent *will* — (*Gestures ascending*)

TOM (*sneeringly*)

Hot-air, too!

VAUX (*continues the reading*)

“The brilliant young author of ‘Millions in a Jitney’ ” —

WATTS (*correcting*)

“Jiffy” — Misprint! — “Millions in a Jiffy” —

VAUX (*continues*)

— the book of the hour — relates his impressions of “The Royal Sneeze” — (*Turns to Watts bewildered*) “The Royal Sneeze”?

WATTS

That's a brand of snuff! — Just put on sale!

VAUX

But you don't "snuff"!

WATTS

Good God, no!

VAUX

Oh, I see, this is fiction? — I hope they paid your usual rates.

WATTS (*protesting*)

Nothing! Nothing! Mere expression of my views! — I couldn't possibly accept remuneration for an interview.— But they *did* pay handsomely to use my portrait. (*Shows a roll of bills*)

VAUX (*still reading, approvingly*)

H'm! Style! — even *this* has style!

TOM

What you been doing, Watts — a "best seller"?

WATTS (*with offended dignity*)

I hope not! "Best seller"! — Rot, every one of them! No more style — literary style — than my Chinaman's laundry-bill. Written down — all of 'em, down to the groundlings.

TOM (*guying*)

And you go on writing up — over their heads? Shakespeare didn't.

WATTS

I should say not! That's the one thing I envy him for: no illusions about his public! Wrote right down to their level — every time.

TOM

Why don't you?

WATTS

I wish I could bring myself to it — write the way

Shakespeare did: (*with disdain*) — give the public what they want — There's money in it!

VAUX (*looks at him sharply*)

The snuff's working!

WATTS (*apologetic*)

Well, I begin to wonder whether I've been quite just toward this — stranger. (*Taps his purse-pocket*)

VAUX (*assenting*)

Improves on personal acquaintance.

WATTS (*exultant*)

Good! You are receptive! (*Goes quickly to door and opens*) (*Calls*) Mr. Griggs. (*Ushers in Mr. Griggs*) (*Griggs is brisk, sanguine, forceful — and uneducated. His clothes — rather loud — obviously from an expensive tailor: too much so for correctness; but he bears the signs of up-to-date prosperity — including plenty of showy jewelry*)

WATTS (*presenting him — to Vaux*)

Mr. Griggs — Mr. Bruce Vaux — *the* sculptor — and Mr. Savile — a painter.

GRIGGS (*extends hand to Vaux*)

My friend's — (*Indicates Watts*) — been telling me about your statue.

VAUX

But didn't I see you, while ago, up at City Hall?

GRIGGS (*nods "yes"*)

I was there boosting your "Ky-oty" —

WATTS (*sotto-voce*) (*To Griggs*)

Qui-ote! — Mr. Griggs is a patron of the Arts.

VAUX

You collect?

GRIGGS

Not so much collect as distribute.— When I get hold of something beautiful I want to share it with the whole world — from Maine to California — the Lakes to the Gulf — same's I'm doing with Watts.

WATTS

Noble sentiment!

GRIGGS

And from what he tells me about your Dan O'Keety —

WATTS (*correcting: sotto-voce*)

— Qui-ote! — Qui-ote! —

GRIGGS

— I don't believe a man has a right to monopolize such a — a — che — (*Looks at Watts questioningly*)

WATTS

Chef-d'œuvre —

GRIGGS

— Such a 'che-figger — properly handled — would do us no end of good — (*Watts is disconcerted*) be the making of *you*.

WATTS

Mr. Vaux doesn't think of himself — in this work.— I've told you, repeatedly — his motif: (*with grandiose gesture*) to relight the fires of chivalry!

GRIGGS

And it sure will!

VAUX (*delighted*)

You think so?

GRIGGS

Sure! — if he's worked right.— I'd make him kind

of moral-bracer to the world — from Portland M-E to Portland O-R — the Lakes to the Gulf — a sort of antidote to — most everything — from Charlie Chaplin to the Kaiser. (*Laughs loudly at his own joke. Starts to slap Vaux on back, but changes his mind at glare from Watts*)

VAUX

I've no such wild ambitions,— though I do hope for some good — from what I cut in stone.

GRIGGS

Yes, but what use cut stone, if you don't cut ice? Stuck away in some millionaire's art-gallery — or tucked away down here, it won't do much good — 'cept among your own bunch — who don't need it — from what I hear about you.— You've got to put that where folks'll see it — millions of them.

VAUX

That's the intention of the Aldermen — if they like it — by God's Grace.

GRIGGS

I hope they don't — for *your* sake! — Where'd they put him?

VAUX

The new Court House!

GRIGGS

And who'd see him there? — Lawyers! — That's no company for Mister Ky-oty —

WATTS (*turns away despairingly*)

GRIGGS (*continues*)

— from what your friend (*Indicates Watts*) says about him.

VAUX

I'd prefer him in the Park — some Public Square.

GRIGGS (*protesting*)

That means car-fare for most folks.— And they'd never "get" him.— You must *hand* it to them — on a silver platter.

VAUX (*bewildered*)

I — I don't quite understand —

GRIGGS

Copies! — Duplicates — Statuettes — Plaster-Paris stuff! — From Casco, Maine, to 'Frisco, Cal. — the Lakes to the Gulf.— That's what I'd do with — Mr. Ky-oty: make him a house-hold word! — That's your idea, isn't it?

VAUX (*rather shame-faced*)

I've had such dreams — (*Lost in reverie*)

GRIGGS

Dreams don't get you anywhere! I'll show you the real thing! — if the Aldermen don't "crab" him. (*Taps him on shoulder*) Just wake-up and put a price on your figger.— I'll pay anything in reason.

VAUX (*fully awake, and excited — almost to ecstasy*)

You *have* paid, already: with your zeal — enthusiasm — your sympathy and understanding.— That is price enough! — I'll go up to City Hall — — at once — and withdraw from the competition.— He is yours! — (*Makes to rush out*)

WATTS (*intervening*)

Before you go, Vaux — arrange with Mr. Griggs — the price.

VAUX (*wildly*)

Copies — duplicates — statuettes — my dream!
That's price enough — the *only* price!

GRIGGS

Nix! I'm not around stealing candy from children nor deceiving the blind — (*Takes out his cheque-book and writes*) Business is business! — Five thousand dollars for the statue — that's what you'd get from the Aldermen — if you took first-prize — five thousand dollars (*hands Vaux the cheque, who takes it gingerly*) and ten cents royalty — (*To the others*) — you witness this — it'll go in the contract — ten cents royalty on every hundred cigars. — (*Gives Vaux and others a luxurious cigar*)

VAUX (*bracing himself*)

“Cigars”?

WATTS (*quickly*)

Mr. Griggs is Envoy from the Court of Lady Nicotine!

GRIGGS

I represent the Smoker's Syndicate — and its allied interests.

WATTS (*explaining*)

Including “The Royal Sneeze.”

VAUX

H'm — And you want my statue to advertise your wares?

GRIGGS

No! No! I want our wares to advertise your statue. (*To Watts*) You know what we can do with his “Don Cre-o-soty”?

VAUX (*winces at the blunder*)

WATTS (*correcting, sotto-voce*)

Qui-ote! Qui-ote!! Qui-ote!!!

GRIGGS

We'll make another "Kewpie"! — of Mister Kewpoty!

VAUX (*blankly*)

Will you? Indeed?

GRIGGS

Yes, or a second "Billikens."

VAUX (*twinkling*) (*To the "dummy" with the costume*)

You hear that, Dulcinea? They'll make your knight a second "Billikens"! — You think he'd like that? — No! Never! It would be sacrilege! —

(*Offers to return cheque to Griggs, who declines it*)

I thank you — but — well — it's not being done!

TOM (*persuasively*)

The deuce it isn't! Look at the "Angelus" —

Millet's master-piece — used to advertise a pianola!

GRIGGS

A hand-organ — only played with your feet!

VAUX (*protesting*)

I shouldn't want that on *my* conscience.

WATTS

There's Millais's "Bubbles" — painted by order — to "puff" a soap.

VAUX

Millais had a large family — and needed the money.

WATTS (*picks up an eye-shade*)

And this bit of humble card-board — (*Puts it on the*

head of "the young Pericles") — advertised in every optician's shop — by this master-work of Phidias.

GRIGGS

He doesn't object!

VAUX (*with suppressed humor*)

Nor shall I — when I'm dead two thousand years!
— (*Puffing the cigar, with obvious delight*) Still,
this cigar, I admit, is worth a statue!

GRIGGS

That's imported! The cigar we want to push is our own make — the "Cachuca."

VAUX (*staggered*)

Oh, the "Cachuca"?

GRIGGS

The "pet" of the Trust — and a knock-out — for five cents.

VAUX

H'm, I see!

GRIGGS

We want to push its sale up into the millions.

VAUX

With the help of my "Don Quixote"? — No, thank you! — You can't have it — for the "Cachuca"! (*Thrusts cheque on him*)

GRIGGS

Why? Because it's Trust-made?

VAUX

No! no! I've no feeling 'gainst Trusts — as Trusts.

GRIGGS

Then, why? — Because it's a five-cent cigar?

VAUX

No!—Because it's a rotten bad cigar—your Cachuca! I smoke them.—(*Takes one from box, and thrusts it at Griggs*) (*With fervor*) They are the sign and symbol of the very things *he* fought against!—The world calls them wind-mills, but they were really—in one shape or other—Cachucas!—I mean that figure (*indicates the statue*—cut in spotless Carrara—to revive his spirit in men—the spirit of chivalry to the gentle, tender, helpless sex!—And you'd have him advertise your rude, cruel, brutal—spread these broadcast—by the millions—like an influenza!—Did you ever see a lady *encounter* a Cachuca? Or think of her feelings at the mere *approach* of one?

GRIGGS (*laughing*)

I never did think of that!

VAUX

That's the trouble! You don't think of those soft, sensitive, delicate creatures: neither in great crises nor—cigars. And from such disregard of their feelings, comes all the evils of modern life and society! (*Beating Griggs down, with each item*) That's why you have wars—filthy tenements—(*Points to the one seen through window at back*)—the tired, starved young girls in shop and factory—the jammed, reeking sub-ways and tram-cars—all the horrors and cruelties of the day—right down to your dirty milk at twelve cents and doubtful eggs at sixty!

GRIGGS (*protesting*)

I don't sell the milk and eggs!

VAUX

They are only Cachucas in other form — And you sell *them!*

GRIGGS (*extending cheque*)

But with this in bank, *you* won't have to smoke 'em.

VAUX

No! But other poor devils will! — And ladies must smell them! — I'll not have that on the conscience of my Quixote! — Your Cachuca is well proportioned — securely rolled — and neatly varnished, — and I might consider your offer — if your powerful Trust can devise some subtle means — to make it out of tobacco instead of sawdust, shoe-strings and fish-oil! (*Gives him the "Cachuca" cigar and makes to exit*)

GRIGGS (*peevish and threatening*)

Mr. Vaux — I always get what I go for — in some shape or other — and I suppose we can get some kind of a "Don Mosquito" — somewhere.

VAUX (*turns*)

Doubtless! There's no patent on him!

GRIGGS (*cajolingly*)

I won't say as good as yours!

VAUX (*comes down*)

Yes, yes — better — some of them — much better — for your purpose! Because so different from my Quixote. — I see this knight a joyous, exultant soul! His lean, lithe, ungainly form tense with love-of-battle — for the weak and helpless. — His face, not drawn, haggard, rueful — but gay, smiling, radiant with victory, glorified by the holy cause that he made his own, against a world grown careless, cruel, discourteous to womanhood! — That's how I mean

him to look — by God's help! But most "Don Quixotes," you'll find, in pen, paint or marble, look like — like — well, as if they'd been smoking your Cachucas! (*Exits to alcove*)

GRIGGS (*to Watts*) (*angrily*)

You said he was hard-up!

WATTS (*assenting*)

Desperately!

GRIGGS

Doesn't look so! — (*Puts cheque in pocket*) — I wasn't prepared for this!

WATTS

I warned you — you'd need — *tact*.

GRIGGS

"Tact?" — He needs a strait-jacket! (*Exits, slamming door*) (*Watts and Tom follow*) (*Vaux re-enters, carrying a whiskey-carafe: gets from "kitchenette" a small jar of dried herrings, and a box of crackers; pours a glass of the carafe's contents — cold tea — which he is about to drink, when there's a knock at door*)

VAUX

Come! (*Enter Savile — Tom's father. He is tall and spare: — of strong, "iron" face; his manner brusque, decisive, domineering; his speech, sharp, clear-cut, rather rasping*)

VAUX

Just in time, Mr. Savile! — Join me. (*Moves to take up another glass*)

SAVILE

I don't drink.

VAUX

Not even cold tea or — (*Offers*) — a dried herring?

SAVILE (*declining*)

Thank you. (*Throws book, papers, etc., from chair, and dusts it off before sitting down*)

VAUX

Very bracing — I learned in Japan — (*Continues his repast*) (*Savile offers envelope*) What's that?

SAVILE

Tom's *écote* — for the studio-rent. — I brought it, 'cause he didn't give you last month's. (*Tosses envelope on table*)

VAUX (*as if to recall*)

Didn't he?

SAVILE

No!

VAUX (*apologetic, for Tom*)

Lately, he's had several models — sitting.

SAVILE

Where? — Lafayette restaurant! — Cheque was paid to *them*. — For dried herring? Or Spring-chicken?

VAUX (*innocently*)

They're very nice, there.

SAVILE (*glancing at picture on easel*)

I see! — How's the boy doing?

VAUX

Well enough.

SAVILE

"Well enough" isn't good enough!

VAUX

He's doing better than most boys do who don't *have* to do. Tom has talent, and he'd go far, if the going were harder.

SAVILE

He'll find it harder, before he gets through!

VAUX

I hope so! — I wish you no ill-luck, sir, but great thing for Tom if you'd lose your health or — money.

SAVILE

Do I look like a man who's going to?

VAUX

No, no, no! — Quite the contrary!

SAVILE (*with a dig at Vaux's frugal meal*)

If poverty is such a sure road — for artists, I wonder more of 'em don't get somewhere. God knows they're poor enough!

VAUX

Not Tom!

SAVILE

He will be, if he isn't careful!

VAUX

Trust your son for that!

SAVILE (“No”)

I don't trust him. — That's why I put him here, with you. I expect *you* to look after him —

VAUX

This is a work-shop, Mr. Savile, not a nursery.

SAVILE (*chuckling at his joke*)

You'd think it was — a nursery, — from the halls, full of “dolls” and “babies.”

VAUX (*apologetic*)

Jake has the usual janitor's family.

SAVILLE

Vaux, I don't expect Tom to be a saint.—I wasn't at his age.

VAUX

That came later?

SAVILLE

I know youth will have its fling, and I don't mind his having a good time, down here, so long as he doesn't make a fool of himself — and fall in love.

VAUX

Can you do one without the other?

SAVILLE

He's done both — and you know it!

VAUX

I know he's painting better,— since Miss Brough came to us — if that's in your mind.

SAVILLE

Constantly! He talks of marrying her.

VAUX

Yes, he's talked to me.

SAVILLE

Think of it!

VAUX (*ruefully*)

I do! — constantly.

SAVILLE

My son and that — shop-girl! Who would believe it?

VAUX

Any one who knows her.

SAVILE (*staggered*)

What!

VAUX

She's very lovely: lovable: worth any man's love.

SAVILE

Let him love her as much as he likes — but when it comes to *marrying* a rat of a girl —

VAUX (*protesting*)

Please, Mr. Savile!

SAVILE

Yes, just that! A girl any man with a bit of canvas and a paint-brush can hire to show her naked body — (*Points to Tom's canvas*)

VAUX (*flaring*)

No! not Miss Brough! — Others, yes, plenty of them, sweet and pure as she — lend their graces at the shrine of beauty — and neither *take* nor *give* thought of evil. — But Rhoda — if she were starving — Tom will tell you! — no man should see as much as one may see at any dinner-party or ball-room of your own world!

SAVILE (*"hedging" — alarmed by Vaux's fervor*)

I've nothing 'gainst the girl; she's not to blame for what she is. — But — I want Tom to marry his own kind — a girl of position — family — wealth.

VAUX

Isn't yours enough? Fifty millions — they say you have.

SAVILE (*deriding*)

"Fifty millions!" — If I have forty, I'm doing well.

VAUX

And as Tom's wife, Miss Brough will do them credit.

SAVILE

Doubtless! — Born in an alley-tenement, likely —

VAUX (“*Yes*”)

One of yours. (*Points to tenement seen at back*)

SAVILE

And grew up in the gutter.— You don’t get a lily from the muck-heap!

VAUX

O, but you do, sometimes! — That’s one of Nature’s grim, delightful jokes — proof of God’s magic — to grow the lily from the mire, and the rankest weed in your hot-house!

SAVILE

I don’t want the mire dragged into my home.— You know this girl’s origin?

VAUX

Her mother, I know, had poetry — imagination — a sense of music: she named her child “Rhoda”!
(*To himself*) Rhoda!

SAVILE

After the “rowdy” father, maybe! — He was a fixture ’round here.— One of the parish-workers got me his record — when I found what was going on here — and was serious.— At times he’d have money — lots of it! — that he’d squander in the wildest extravagances — fine clothes — fast horses — best restaurants — gay parties to the shabby neighbors — spoil them with costly food and champagne —

VAUX (*rather to himself*)

“Champagne?” — I see!

SAVILE

And keep it up till the last dollar was gone! — Then,

of course, the usual period of credit — borrowing — and poverty — down-right poverty — so even the parish-workers would hear of it. And when they'd go to offer help Brough would order them out.

VAUX

If he'd been drinking? —

SAVILE

Yes! — If they found him sober — he'd *kick* them out!

VAUX (*rather to himself*)

Good! — (*Savile disconcerted*) I mean, if he chose that way to spend what he earned —

SAVILE

“Earned” — nothing! Gambled!

VAUX

Wall Street?

SAVILE

Cards — horses — prize-fights! — And when he was hard-up — no other way to get money — he'd enter the ring himself! —

VAUX

H'm? — “Prize-ring”?

SAVILE

Yes, and usually win.

VAUX (*as if suddenly enlightened*)

Ah, that explains it! — Now I see!

SAVILE (*gratified*)

I thought so!

VAUX

Yes, I see now — where she got her fire, spirit, pride, courage, strength and wits to look out for herself — from the prize-ring man! — That explains —

SAVILE (*interrupting*)

And his reckless extravagance — gambling, fancy raiment, fine food, rare wines, fast horses — *that* explains something, too!

VAUX (*assenting*)

Rhoda's nice sense of luxury — her natural love of beautiful things — her perfect taste in clothes — the few she has — the color, the cut, the hang of them: — the grace of her walk, the turn of her hand, the poise of her head! — You don't get that sort of thing from beer or ginger-pop! — It's the champagne in her blood! That's why she's so different from all the rest!

SAVILE

"Different," perhaps — but you know, Vaux, what these girls are — down here! — Just what they're made of!

VAUX

They're as God made them! — Who knows more than that?

SAVILE

You know more of *this* one.

VAUX (*dubiously*)

N-o!

SAVILE (*impatiently*)

You *see* enough of her — every day.

VAUX

Yes — and you see the sunlight, every day — and sometimes a rainbow — and a violet in the florist's shop — and, at night, a star dancing in the skies; but you don't know what they're made of!

SAVILE

I know this — I'll get no help here! (*Makes to go*)

VAUX

Nowhere! — You're too late, Savile.

SAVILE (*his good-humor seemingly restored*)

Perhaps — but I'm glad to know just what I'm up against.

VAUX (*jovially, and with crescent spirit*)

Love and youth — that's all you're up against! —
Two young, eager, adoring souls find their mate. —
And when that happens, Mr. Savile — we're too old
to remember — you and I — but when it's a creature
like Rhoda Brough — (*Stands at piano, and plays
wildly the "Hungarian Rhapsodie"*)

SAVILE (*stopping him*)

You know, Vaux, some people think you're — (*Taps
forehead meaningly*)

VAUX (*assenting*)

They say so!

SAVILE

But I don't believe you're — looney!

VAUX (*bows his gratitude and plays more wildly*)

SAVILE

You're only "moony" —

VAUX (*rather to himself*)

"Moony?"

SAVILE

You're in love! — but you don't know it!

VAUX (*stops playing*)

What a blessing! — Not to know it! with these!
(*Indicates the wrinkles on his temples*) (*Savile
exits*)

VAUX (*laughing*)

In love! I wish no man worse than that! — at my age.— In love! (*Looks in mirror: at wrinkles of his temples, the lines at mouth-corners, the iron-grey of his hair, etc. Frowns: then stamps his foot, as if taking new resolution*) Work! That's a blessing, too! (*Takes up sculptor's tools*) Work! You duffer! (*Sees the "Dulcinea" costume on dummy*) (*He drops into a chair. The mallet falls from his hand. He gazes, fixedly, with a sad, wistful smile, on the costume that recalls Rhoda*) Work!

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

[SCENE TWO]

The time is night of the same day. The scene is lighted only by the brilliant reflector under which Vaux works, and by a shaded candle on the small table at left.

At rise of curtain Vaux is at work on the heroic-size model, in the alcove. Higgins, in his suit-of-armor, at the table left, is arranging Vaux's evening meal. He pours hot-water into tea-pot.

HIGGINS

Tea's brewing, Mr. Vaux. (*Takes off part of the armor*)

VAUX (*indifferently*)

Yes. (*Continues his work*)

HIGGINS (*after a pause*)

Dinner is served, Mr. Vaux. (*Doffs more of the armor*)

VAUX (*same tone*)

Yes.

HIGGINS (*after a pause*)

Supper's getting cold, sir. (*More armor off*)

VAUX (*absorbed in work*)

Warm it up — warm it up — for breakfast. — Have you dined, Higgins?

HIGGINS (*gloomily*)

I had no appetite for dinner.

VAUX

Sure it's not the other way about? — Take some!

HIGGINS (*lifting dish-cover*)

Just enough for one, sir.

VAUX (*at work*)

I can't eat now.— Go on — go on! — What's the odds!

HIGGINS (*absent-minded*)

Fifty — twenty — I — I — guess my wife's waiting at Pedro's for dinner.—

VAUX

Don't keep a lady waiting — for dinner.— It's dangerous! — “doggone dangerous” —

HIGGINS (*winces at the reminder*)

It's a crime, sir, but Mrs. Higgins is used to it.

VAUX

You'll find some — dinner — in the rose-jar: a Pedro dinner anyway. (*Higgins takes some money from rose-jar*) I'll see that Cosie has hers.

HIGGINS (*as he fills a bucket with oats*)

It's ready, sir.

VAUX

You keep the oats up here?

HIGGINS

Yes, sir.— Below, the Janitor's family eats 'em! They're vegetarians. (*Makes to exit*)

VAUX

Here! (*Tosses him his over-coat*)

HIGGINS (*hesitating*)

But you'll be going out?

VAUX (“No”)

No more to-night.

HIGGINS (*as he puts on coat*)

Mine's still — up-town — gettin' pressed —

VAUX (*guying him*)

You shouldn't have it *pressed*, such weather.—
'Tisn't according to Hoyle: his first rule in poker:
"Remember there'll be another game some other
night" — and they may run better — at Sheepshead
or Saratoga.

HIGGINS (*shame-faced*)

I know it's — criminal — but straight from the stable, Mr. Vaux: — inside information. I bet everything I had: — even my dinner.

VAUX

You bet that before you had it — and your wife's dinner, too!

HIGGINS

I don't mind that! But I — I — gave the tip to —
a lady — and almost got her to plunge —

VAUX (*angry*)

"Plunge," Higgins?

HIGGINS (*rather frightened*)

But she didn't, thank God! — except four dollars.

VAUX (*amused*)

That's hardly — criminal.

HIGGINS

I know it, now. (*insisting*) Yes, sir, and I'm going to give her back the four dollars — and say I couldn't place the bet.

VAUX

I don't think the lady would like that. — But, Higgins, no more tips!

HIGGINS

Never, sir! — I swear — never again — unless I'm *absolutely* sure! (*There's a knock at the door*)
(*Higgins opens the door*)

WATTS (*entering*)

Isn't your phone in order?

VAUX (*pleased*)

Perfect! — It's cut-off: I couldn't stand the buzz.

HIGGINS (*sotto-voce*) (*To Watts*)

Collector's buzz.

WATTS

I tried to call you from the Lafayette.— I met Goldoni there — one of your rivals, to-day, before the Aldermen. (*A slight troubled pause*)

VAUX (*indifferently*)

Yes? (*Goes on with his work*)

WATTS

I spoke with Schnaubengigl, too.

VAUX

Yes? — Schnauby say anything?

WATTS

"A damn shame," he says — those aldermen!

HIGGINS (*to himself*)

They're a crime!

VAUX

Didn't he get a prize?

WATTS (*embarrassed*)

Yes, first prize they gave him.— Goldoni second!

VAUX (*staggered for a moment*) (*Then, with forced smile*)

Not even "place" for me, eh? (*Looks to Higgins*)

HIGGINS

A crime!

WATTS

They gave your Quixote "honorable mention."

VAUX

Well, as Higgins would put it, I got a "show," anyway.

HIGGINS (*tearfully*)

No, sir! You never had a show,—with those grafters at City Hall.

VAUX (*reprovingly*)

Now! Now! You're seeing wind-mills.

WATTS (*insisting*)

He's right!—to keep "Don Quixote" from first prize took the devil's own work!

HIGGINS

And he had to be on the job — 'cause Miss Brough's been burning candles for a month.

VAUX (*perplexed*)

"Candles?"

HIGGINS (*nods "yes"*)

To her name-saint — so you'd win. And she bet on you, too, with Mr. Wills.

VAUX (*moved*)

I wish for her sake — I'd — done better work.— But Schnauby's design is hard to beat! (*Takes up glass of cold tea*) Here's to him!—

HIGGINS (*to Watts*)

It's criminal! (*Sniffles*)

VAUX (*continuing*)

— And his statue!

WATTS (*disgusted*)

Of Katzenjammer!

VAUX (*correcting*)

Kimmel — Katzenkimmel! —

HIGGINS

A crime — crime!

WATTS

“Katzen” — Never heard of him!

VAUX

Great man! in his own country!

WATTS (*disgusted*)

Like the other figure they took? — Vinichianti?

VAUX (*prompting*)

Vidivici?

WATTS

Never heard of *him*!

VAUX

O, Vidivici — he's a — a —

WATTS

You never heard of him!

HIGGINS

Me neither!

VAUX

But some of the Art-Commission, of the Aldermen,
never heard of “Don Quixote”!

WATTS

That's what did you! — Politics!

VAUX (“No”)

Wind-mills! Wind-mills!

WATTS (*insisting*)

Politics! — I knew it from the start! — That's why

I brought you Griggs — to fall back on! — You never had a chance!

VAUX (*incredulous*)

Because of politics?

HIGGINS

Sure, Mr. Vaux! — What's the Spanish vote in this town 'gainst the millions of Schnaubengigls — or the barber vote — and bananas?

VAUX (*dismissing the idea*)

The best man won! — and I'm glad — for their wives, mothers, sweethearts — families. — Schnaubengigl has a family?

HIGGINS

Several! (*Sidles over to rose-jar*)

WATTS

One of 'em's with him now, at the Lafayette.

VAUX (*sharply, as he catches Higgins replacing money in rose-jar*)

What you up to?

HIGGINS (*sniffling*)

I can't eat to-night: I'd choke myself.

VAUX (*touched*)

But Mrs. Higgins will want to eat.

HIGGINS

I'd choke *her*! — She loves you, Mr. Vaux. (*Rubs his eyes*) She couldn't eat, after this — 'specially no table-d'hote.

WATTS

No more could I, Higgins. — Try a *real* dinner. (*Shoves a bill in Higgins' pocket*) (*Higgins exits*)

VAUX

Fine character, that! — beautiful! (*Hand on*

Watts' shoulder) And — with chaps like you — a beautiful world!

WATTS

Not to *me*, unless you'll listen now, to — reason and — sense.

VAUX

Dollars and cents?

WATTS

S-e-n-s-e --

VAUX

That spells "Griggs."

WATTS

You sure it isn't pride — vanity?

VAUX

I'm quite sure it — *is*!

WATTS

They're costly luxuries!

VAUX

Yes, but I have so few, now-a-days — I cling to them — (*Hand on fine chair*) — like to my antiques. — And you wouldn't have me give them up?

WATTS

Just this once! — Get into the game! — Put pride in your snuff-pocket — as I did — along with more money — (*Taps his pocket*) — than I ever dreamed was in town!

VAUX (*regretfully*)

The snuff's working!

WATTS (*assenting*)

Working for me — from Maine to Cal — etcetera! People who never heard of Don Quixote nor Bruce Vaux — great as he is! — to-day know Montessor

Watts! (*Picks up news-paper containing his portrait*)

VAUX

Already?

WATTS

Rich and famous!

VAUX

Your friends will rejoice.

WATTS (*with laugh of bitterness*)

Yes! — I just left a group at the Lafayette. They hadn't seen the papers — O, no! — but they saw the waiters! — head-waiters, even! pester me with attentions: whisper some "specialty" — the very fellows — who'd always *snort* at my order of "small sirloin and French-fried." — To get rid of 'em I had to, — well, you know how you scatter powder, to drive off — things!

VAUX (*laughing*)

And that's the "game" I should get into? — What could it give me I haven't now?

WATTS (*lightly*)

For one thing — the telephone!

VAUX (*eyes heavenward*)

Then, O Lord, keep me poor!

WATTS

That's only one of a thousand things that you could have now, — for ease, comfort, luxury: the best of wines — decent food — "purple and fine-linen" — theatres — opera — a car — all the luxuries that even the "mutts" have now-a-days! — I'm going after them!

VAUX (*laughing*)

You think it's worth the powder? — Griggs' punk?
(*Takes "Cachucas" from box*)

WATTS

I'm thinking only of your good!

VAUX

As you see it! — But you're drunk — (*Watts startled*) — with snuff! It's gone to your head — "The Royal Sneeze" — from your pocket. — It would mine. — We're not used to — "snuff." — It's a drug: makes people insane!

WATTS

I'll never rest till you're insane — that way. (*Unseen by Vaux, he drops a roll of bills into the rose-jar*)

VAUX

The day I'm insane "that way" — you'll know I'm crazy — *really* crazy, so I'll run amuck — (*Poises his mallet threateningly*) — smash that Quixote into smithereens — and beat my poor, crazy brains out on the wreckage — before Griggs can use *him* for a sign-post, with a "Cachuca" stuck in his mouth. (*Watts takes a "Cachuca" from the box: lights it, and it flares like a torch; he throws it angrily into the gold-fish aquarium on table, where it continues to burn*) (*Watts blows on his scorched fingers*)

WATTS

I understand how you feel! And you're right! You always are — in such matters. — And you're a bit worse than usual to-night. — But I know, too, what it means to create a master-piece, and then have it stick around, like a sore finger. — Come on,

let's get out of here! — We'll go over to Pedro's. — No, the Lafayette — while the crowd's there. — And we'll make a night of it!

VAUX

Par example?

WATTS

Well, first off, get boiling drunk: then have dinner and —

VAUX (*gestures disinclination*)

WATTS

Don't feel like it, eh?

VAUX (*dubiously*)

Not like — dinner. — Some other time, Watts — (*Makes to proceed with his work*)

WATTS

Hang it, I can't eat alone — to-night — dine en-prince — with all this luck! — You suppose Miss Brough would dine with me?

VAUX

Delighted! — Go find her! — And try to get hold of Tom Savile! — I'm sure she'd like him along. (*Crosses to window*)

WATTS (*with a sour face*) (*Looks at his watch*)

I'm sure I wouldn't — find her in now.

VAUX (*still at window*)

Yes, yes! she's at home! — There's light in her window! — Be off! I must get on the job! (*Watts exits*)

(*Vaux, alone, resumes his work*) (*From the restaurant near-by is heard a fascinating Spanish waltz: Vaux unconsciously nods his head in rhythm with the dance, and hums the tune*) (*A policeman's whistle*)

sounds in the street: is repeated; then a pistol-shot rings out: a window-pane, at right, is shattered: also the shade of the lamp under which Vaux stands, and the light extinguished)

VAUX (*startled, staggered*)

What the devil —! (*Crosses to broken window, where the curtain blows*) (*Re-crosses: strikes a match, to examine the lamp: exits to room at left where you hear him calling:*)

“Jake! — O, Jake! — Send up a bulb! — electrics! — and a candle.” (*Then the rumble of a dumb-waiter: and Jake’s voice, with his customary German exclamations*) (*A pause*)

(*Rhoda enters, in the darkness — at door left: she is breathless, panicky, distracted: she holds the door slightly ajar — but so that no light from the hall falls on her: — her presence is only felt, not seen. The street-door, below, bangs: there follow heavy foot-steps, and voices: “She’s here — she ran in here,” etc. — Rhoda shuts the door quickly, but silently: turns the key and pushes the bolt — a conspicuous wooden affair. The voices grow louder — seem approaching: and Rhoda, after a frightened glance about the room, rushes into alcove, and on the way loses a low-shoe — much like a slipper*) (*Vaux re-enters, with a lighted candle: starts to re-adjust the lamp: the noises in the hall below resume: Vaux listens: hears Jake’s voice, with the usual “Donnerwetter,” etc. Crosses to door: shows surprise on finding it locked and bolted: looks about, bewildered, and sees slipper; picks it up — still more perplexed. All the while, the noise in the hall-way*

continues: doors open and close: murmur of voices saying: "No, no — no one came here," etc.) (There's a knock at the door: and the knob tried repeatedly) (Vaux takes up lance, then crosses and silently unbolts door: picks up book — copy of "Don Quixote." With lance on shoulder he struts to and fro — rather jauntily — like a knight-errant keeping his "watch-on-arms"; he holds in front of his eyes the copy of "Don Quixote" from which he reads silently; his moving lips and brows, his changing expression of features, shifting from smiles to frowns, show his intense interest.— There's another knock at door: then it opens. Homans, a private-agency officer in "plain-clothes," and a policeman, in uniform, enter. Vaux takes no notice of them. They stand dumbfounded as Vaux reads aloud, with fire of tone and gesture)

VAUX

"He leaped from his cot: seized his lance — made to thrust — whereon the spectres vanished: Greed, Cruelty, Injustice, Tyranny! — fled before his glance.— Instead, he saw the Angel of Peace, 'gainst whom he leaned faintly, as he smiled farewell to those about him.— Good-bye, sweet memories; good-bye, pleasant fancies; good-bye, merry friends, for I perceive I am dying, in the wish to see you happy in the other life." Those were his last words: Don Quixote's! — Beautiful, don't you think? *(During the above speech the policeman has touched his forehead once or twice, and winked to Homans)*

HOMANS *(as he takes the book from Vaux's hand, and tosses it on table)*

Very fine — but — when we knocked, just now, the door was locked,— bolted.— Why? Why?

VAUX

Why *not*? —Why not bolt doors — draw the bridge that spans the moat — call my men-at-arms — when my castle is attacked?

POLICEMAN

Well, you see, Mr. Vaux — that's the name on your door — we're after some one who came in here —

VAUX

Came in here?

POLICEMAN

Some woman.

VAUX (*correcting, gently*)

Lady — if you please — lady!

POLICEMAN (*good naturedly*)

“Lady,” then, if you don't like “woman”— but my daughter's in the High School, and she says “woman's” good grammar.

VAUX (*assenting*)

“Good grammar,” maybe: but bad manners —'specially from the Law. (*Bows to policeman*) And whom did she *murder* — this lady? — I heard the shot.

POLICEMAN

Nothing like that: that shot was only a warning. It's a case of “street-walking.”

VAUX (*staggered*)

That is bad — for a lady: “street-walking”! She should keep to the side-walk — and lucky then, to escape those brutal chauffeurs. I'm glad you discourage street-walking.

HOMANS

And soliciting! — Get that?

VAUX (*appears too dazed to notice*)

POLICEMAN

She spoke to this gentleman.

VAUX

Doubtless mistook him for one — she knew.

POLICEMAN

What did she say to you?

HOMANS

Usual thing: "Good-evening, dearie."

VAUX (*jovially*)

Greeting of some kindly soul, to cheer your way, this stormy night. I'm often honored so — and, doubtless, you, too, officer?

POLICEMAN

That's right!

VAUX

'Tis the custom of our ladies, this part of town. — And, if the dear creature should chance to overlook me, in passing, I make bold to remind her by smile or nod. And she'll respond, always, unless she be some timid fawn, unused to our ways. — You know that, officer.

POLICEMAN

That's right!

HOMANS

But this — lady — grabbed my pin — (*Hand on tie*) (*To policeman*) I told you.

POLICEMAN

That's right! — (*To Vaux*) He told me, 'twas a hold-up. — And fired a shot.

VAUX

And she ran, of course — like the frightened gazelle
of poet's fancy.

HOMANS

Well, where is this fancy gazabo? Tell us!

VAUX (*absently, as if to himself*)

“Tell me: where does fancy lie — in the heart or in
the eye?”

HOMANS (*with threatening gesture*)

In the eye — if you don't tell us where she is — and
quick! — (*The policeman intervenes: signals caution,
taps his forehead*)

VAUX (*as if dazed*)

What are you?

HOMANS

Can't you see what we are?

VAUX

That? — Yes! (*Indicating policeman*) The Law
— in all its majesty! — But *this* — (*Jabs Homans
vigorously*) — wind-mill! wind-mill!

HOMANS (*angrily*)

Now, for the last time — where have you hid that
damned little —?

VAUX (*instantly claps his hand over Homans' mouth,
and grips his face so he can't move*)

POLICEMAN (*intervening*)

For half-a-cent, I'd arrest you!

VAUX (*having loosened his hold on Homans*)

I'd deserve it — for discourtesy to a guest. I'd ask
his pardon only — he's such a blackguard!

HOMANS

Come along, officer. (*Makes to enter alcove*)

VAUX (*intervening; with lance at rest*)

You can't go there.— That's my shrine.

HOMANS

We're going to search this place, from top to bottom.

POLICEMAN

That's right!

VAUX

Then you have a search-warrant?

HOMANS

Yes! (*Pretends to take document from breast-pocket*)

VAUX

Show it, please.

HOMANS

I don't have to show — (*Tries to push by*)

VAUX (*puts his hand grippingly on shoulder*)

Show it!

POLICEMAN

That's right! — You got to show the warrant.

HOMANS (*disgusted*)

Since when?

VAUX

Since the time of King John — and Magna-Charta! — 1215! (*Homans looks to officer for corroboration*)

POLICEMAN

That's right! — “A man's house is his castle” my daughter says.— We can't go through it, without a writ-of-search. (*To Vaux — with deference*) Unless, maybe, this gentleman will forget his legal rights and *permit* me — to look around — as a guest.

(The curtains of the alcove move, as if blown by an opened window: Vaux notes it)

VAUX *(promptly, with deep bow)*

My house is yours, Señor. Hospitality stands not on the letter of the law. *(Goes to picture, set in double panel, at right: touches a button, and the panel divides showing the "kitchenette")* The cuisine — butler's-pantry — and wine-cellar. I recommend this sherry — *(Holds up bottle of milk)* — Amontillado — 73 — a comet year. *(Vaux goes up stage to curtains)*

HOMANS *(touching forehead significantly)*

Up here?

POLICEMAN *(shakes head "no")*

Not down here! They're all like that — my daughter says — this part of town —

VAUX *(drawing open curtains of alcove)*

The work-room! — *(The deep alcove is in darkness save for the moonlight that falls through the skylight and illumines the equestrian statue. The French windows at back of alcove — or at a diagonal, if the construction of the scene permits — is opened: beyond is seen the rear of a dilapidated tenement house)*

HOMANS *(with suspicion)*

That window's open — *(Goes to window)*

VAUX *(assenting)*

For Cosie.

HOMANS

"Cosie?"

VAUX

My favorite model! — Her shed is below — and we

send down her meals on a rope — (*Indicates a bucket, with rope attached to handle*) (*Then crosses to left*)

HOMANS (*comes down from window, holding Rhoda's hat — the Tam-o'-shanter — behind his back: shows it to policeman, unseen by Vaux*)

VAUX (*touches button, at left: the mirror slides from its frame, disclosing a bed-room*)

The bed-chamber! — (*To policeman*) You'll sleep well, Señor, when you've dined — (*Shows dinner on table*) — by this fire of cedar logs. (*Places big chair before fire-place*) (*He looks about uncertainly, till he finds his umbrella: then seizes Rhoda's hat from Homans, puts it on, quite as if it were his own regular head-wear, and makes to go*)

HOMANS

Where you off to?

VAUX

To look for bail — (*Rubs his forehead, in troubled thought*) — somewhere — to provide for her instant release — somehow — in case you find this unhappy lady (*distracted*) I must find bail — somewhere —

HOMANS (*barring his exit*)

Cash bail — or — what?

VAUX (*jumping at the suggestion*)

Watts, of course! (*Jabs Homans*) Watts, thank you! — Watts! (*Exits*)

POLICEMAN (*touching forehead*)

That's right!

HOMANS (*disgusted*)

He's not too crazy to put one over on us. — He was

stalling, for her get-away. (*Nods toward window*)
(*Angrily*) Go after him! — Run him in!

POLICEMAN (*begins to eat Vaux's dinner*)

Go slow! — I just got out of the Bronx — through a shake-up in this precinct. — Over same sort o' case, too. — It was meat-and-drink for the Societies — and pie for the Sob-Sisters. — And the Commissioner backed 'em up! — (*Begins eating a large chop*) — This fellow's hoppy all right — but he's no hick. And some of these guys 'round here have friends — where you'd least expect it! — There's big swells from Fifth Avenue have rooms down here!

HOMANS (*sneeringly*)

What for?

POLICEMAN

To work — my daughter says. — Some of 'em have good nuts — (*Taps head*) — and want to use 'em. They can't work up there, in the lobster district — account the "atmosphere."

HOMANS

They won't stand for the "Hello dearie's!"

POLICEMAN

They won't cry "bloody murder!" and fire guns! — You'd think you was some bloomin' cereal — like my girl tells about; night-bloomin'-cereal: speak to 'em rough and they close-up — and die for another century. (*Suspiciously*) What's in this, anyway?

HOMANS

Something in it for you, if you get this "skirt."

POLICEMAN

That's easy! — They probably got her now — after

that shot.— And if they didn't, I'll pick her up to-morrow.

HOMANS

That right?

POLICEMAN

Sure! — Just go to night-court — swear out a warrant — I'll serve it to-morrow.

HOMANS

Early?

POLICEMAN

I don't know how early.— I got to go to Confession, in the morning, and that may take some time.— You just get the warrant — I'll 'tend to the rest.

HOMANS (*pretending ignorance*)

What name?

POLICEMAN

"Jane Doe."— If the Judge is fussy — you know they don't like you out-side sleuths — tell him to hold the warrant till I come for it. He knows me.

HOMANS

I'll make the charge "soliciting"—

POLICEMAN

That's right —

HOMANS (*continuing*)

— *and* attempt to rob.

POLICEMAN

No!

HOMANS

Why not? — There's the evidence! (*Shows a diamond-cluster pin*)

POLICEMAN (*turns pin about admiringly*)

Real stuff?

HOMANS

Hocks for a hundred.

POLICEMAN

That'd make it grand-larceny — and five years.

HOMANS (*assenting, with meaning*)

Unless she skips out, after we get the warrant.

POLICEMAN

You're sure she tried to pinch this?

HOMANS

I had it when she tackled me, and — (*Puts the pin in the officer's coat-pocket*) I haven't got it now, have I?

POLICEMAN

That's right; you haven't got it now.— But that's some ring you have there — (*Admires it*) Three sparks!

HOMANS

Goes with pin.

POLICEMAN

I'll bet you have suspender-buttons to match — like that fellow on Broadway.

HOMANS

Not quite so bad — but — I work for "big" people.

POLICEMAN

And you don't work for nothing — eh?

HOMANS

Do *you*? — You know you can't live for nothing now-a-days.

POLICEMAN

That's right!

HOMANS

'Specially when you have a girl at college.—

POLICEMAN

What they spend on fudge used to keep a family!

HOMANS (*indicating ring*)

This would keep a college in fudge.

POLICEMAN

That's right. (*Adjusting pin, in mirror*) The ring *does* go with this!

HOMANS

Yes — and that goes!

POLICEMAN (*looking at pin, dubiously*)

Opal, isn't it?

HOMANS (*assenting*)

From Tiffany's.

POLICEMAN (*makes to hand it back*)

My daughter says they're unlucky — opals.

HOMANS

Not with diamonds all around! — They take the curse off.

POLICEMAN

Maybe that's right. — Anyway, I'll take a chance.
(*Pockets the pin*)

VAUX (*re-entering*)

Well, gentlemen?

HOMANS

“ Well ” nothing! She's got away — your
“ lady ” —

VAUX

I congratulate you.

HOMANS (*surly*)

Thanks!

VAUX (*disregarding him — turns to officer*)

This gentleman — who spoke of his daughter. —

I'm sure he can't enjoy the work cut out for him —

POLICEMAN

We have our orders, boss — and, you know, if there's been a mistake, about a girl, the Judge lets her go — and no harm done.

VAUX

“No harm done”?

HOMANS

If there's nothing on the girl, no!

VAUX

The mark of the Law — is on her! — your fingerprints of suspicion and slander! — And the cleaner her life, the viler they show. — You call it nothing to drag a fair name into the mud of the night-courts — or even *touch* it with the breath of suspicion? Why, sir, once the Law lifts the veil of Innocence — and the harm is done. — Thereafter, “though she be chaste as ice, pure as snow, yet will she not escape calumny!” — Doesn't Hamlet observe to Ophelia?

POLICEMAN

That's right!

VAUX

I thank you. — (*Offering book to officer*) Will you honor me?

POLICEMAN (*declining*)

'Gainst the rules, boss, to take things.

VAUX (*insisting*)

A trifle — my favorite copy of — (*Twinkling*) — “Dan O'Qui-ty”! — You've read it, doubtless, but read it again — and again — until you have it by heart. Make it your companion — this story of “The Perfect Policeman.” It's a school of man-

ners, a code of true courtesy, a guide to right and honor.— It is one of the three books the world could least afford to lose. Read it — and re-read it — until it becomes a very part of yourself; and then you'll come pretty near being as fine a gentleman as a man can who — who — well, who must chase gentle womanhood through the streets.— (*To Homans*) And you, sir — (*Gives him a cigar*)

HOMANS (*declining*)

I don't use tobacco.

VAUX (*thrusting cigar on him*)

Then you'll enjoy the Cachuca! (*Officer and Homans exeunt: Vaux listens at door to their retreating steps*)

RHODA (*motionless on horse, in suit-of-armor*)

Have they gone?

VAUX

Dear lady!

RHODA (*dismounts: comes down the platform steps, taking off the armor*)

Please, forgive me!

VAUX (*with gesture of silence*)

Wait! — They may be — (*Nods toward hall*) (*Listens till the street-door bangs*) No, they've gone!

RHODA

What a fool — to lose my head like that! — (*Apologetic*) — And to run in here!

VAUX

Where else?

RHODA (*she is utterly wrought-up: unnerved: panicky: almost breathless*)

You don't mind? — But — that girl in our shop — my room-mate — (*touches the mourning-band on her sleeve*) — sweet, decent girl — just like this — it was: man spoke to her on the street; she ran, but they caught her and took her to court. When the Judge heard the story, he said it was a wicked shame: made the officer own-up it was a mistake. The papers took it up — the Societies, too — had the officer dismissed; — the girl was cleared of the tiniest suspicion; — but she *couldn't* get over it. — She was going to marry — nice fellow — *he* worried about it — questioned her, over and over — till, one day — she — (*Breaks down*)

VAUX

I know! — Killed herself — It's for *her* you wear —? (*Indicates mourning-band on her sleeve*)

RHODA (*nodding "yes"*)

All the girls — in the shop. — She was the dearest thing! — It all came back — moment that man spoke to me — and I saw who it was.

VAUX

You've seen him before?

RHODA (*promptly*)

Yes! — Last night, and once before, I remember, he stood at the corner — and tipped his hat. He's been in the shop, too — at my counter — and tried to make conversation. — I wouldn't wait on him — and he asked the other girls about me. — Just now — I'd gone out to get my supper — (*Indicates paper-bag of stuff*) — and suddenly he was alongside of me.

VAUX

Spoke to you?

RHODA (*nodding "yes"*)

"Hello, dearie!"—and "could he carry that for me?"—I pretended not to notice, and walked faster—that usually stops them. But he kept right after—talking—and tried to put his arm through mine.—

VAUX (*rather to himself*)

The dog!

RHODA

When I drew 'way, he grabbed my hand —

VAUX

The beast!

RHODA

I cried: "let go," and he said "not till I spoke to him"—and he began to drag me along, all the time pressing my hand tighter and tighter —

VAUX (*louder*)

The brute!

RHODA

I screamed with pain—and then he crushed and bent my hand, till I gasped—couldn't—breathe—

VAUX (*explosive*)

The monster! (*Takes her hand*) Your bare hands, too!

RHODA

No, I had on gloves—(*Shows them*) Perfectly good gloves, too! (*Throws them into the fire-place*) That I wouldn't even *give away* after that—(*Shudders*) Only for the gloves, he'd have —

VAUX

The pig!

RHODA

I *did* faint — almost. — That seemed to frighten him! — He loosened his hold a bit, and said: "Come 'cross the way — I'll get you a drink." When I didn't move, he began again — worse — (*Holds out her hand clinched tightly*)

VAUX

Swine!

RHODA

Till I said: "All right — let go and I'll" — then I reached up and — it wasn't lady-like — but I slapped his face —

VAUX

Good! —

RHODA

— With all my might —

VAUX

— Good! —

RHODA

— And ran! — He close behind — shouting — cursing — and almost had me — till he slipped and fell. — Then some one rushed over — and I heard a shot — and hadn't sense enough to stop and explain.

VAUX

I don't wonder! — You should have told us, at once, about this man trying to — force his acquaintance —

RHODA (*laughing it off*)

Now wouldn't that be funny? — Make a fuss 'cause some fool tries to flirt. — Like what you see in the

movies when the masher tips his hat, and they throw on the screen: "How dare you, Sir! she said"—And the next flicker shows them in a restaurant!—(*Prepares to go*) A girl can look out for herself—if she's used to it.

VAUX (*looking out of window*)

But you can't go out in this storm — (*The windows rattle*)

RHODA

Is it snowing again? (*Makes to go to window*)

VAUX (*intervening, to keep her from window*)

No, but blowing a gale — take you off your feet.

RHODA

O, I'll get home safe enough. (*Makes to go*)

VAUX

No! Wait! I'll watch for a taxi —

RHODA (*laughing*)

To take me 'cross the Square? — a taxi? — They wouldn't let me in, at Varrick Court!

VAUX (*barring her exit*)

You can't leave here — now — in this storm.

RHODA

'Tisn't the storm you fear.— What is it? — That man! (*Tries to go to window*)

VAUX (*preventing her*)

Keep from that draughty window — You'll catch cold.

RHODA

You're 'fraid they'll see me? — They're still about? (*At window*) Yes! In the door-way — 'cross the street —

VAUX

They've stopped to chat.— They'll go presently.

RHODA

They can go to the devil! I won't wait!

VAUX

Yes!

RHODA

Why? What can they do? (*She reaches for her jacket*)

VAUX

Nothing, of course, nothing! They realize their mistake — (*Helps her on with her coat*) But — your jacket is wet.

RHODA (*assenting*)

From the snow.

VAUX

But — your big coat you should wear!

RHODA (*with gesture "no"*)

H'm — h'm — the snow'd spoil it.

VAUX

And your boots wet, too? (*Rhoda extends a low-shoed foot*) Slippers — in such weather! The Lord makes ladies his special care — like sparrows — or they'd all die of pneumonia.— Sit by the fire — a moment — and dry them — and eat your supper — and then, perhaps, you'll accept my escort to your door. (*A pause during which Vaux pretends to work on the statue*) (*Rhoda is occupied with her supper of sandwiches, pickles, eclairs*)

RHODA

Mr. Vaux — will you lend me a shoe? (*Extends her shoeless foot*) I lost one of mine.

VAUX (*pretending ignorance*)

Lost it? — Where?

RHODA

In the snow likely — as I ran.

VAUX

We'll have to find another 'fore you can go. (*During the ensuing dialogue, Vaux makes a pretence of working on the statue, but he is, obviously, preoccupied with the danger of Rhoda; as he moves back and forth, as if to vision the statue at various angles, he glances furtively out the window, taking care that Rhoda shall not see his uneasiness*) (*Church-chimes strike the hour*)

RHODA (*rising*)

It's getting late, Mr. Vaux — and I'm keeping you from work.

VAUX

No, no,— I'll work all the better for you being here — with me. It's always so, somehow.— You put me in the spirit — of the job — just as Cosie does — and Higgins doesn't — sometimes.— You make me think of Spain.— Perhaps it's the dark eyes, eh?

RHODA

Must be Cosie's.— Mine are light-blue.

VAUX

Then it's your coal-black hair.

RHODA

That happens to be red.

VAUX

Quite usual in Spain — I've seen it often.— Just that tint — in Seville.— They call it — (*Uncertain*) — let me see — what do they call that shade of red?

RHODA (*prompting him*)

Rufo?

VAUX

Yes, of course! — I s'pose Tom told you, eh?

RHODA

No — that Spanish girl — Mercedes — who plays at Pedro's restaurant. She learns me her language. —

VAUX (*chaffingly*)

She "*learns*" you, eh?

RHODA (*laughing at the correction*)

Yes, and I *teach* her mine, — teacher! And I have a book, too — "Spanish Taught in Spare Seconds." — I've read some of "Don Quixote" in Spanish. (*Takes up guitar, and strums very softly*)

VAUX

Good! When you marry you can go to Spain on your honey-moon.

RHODA

Yes, I've decided that.

VAUX

And, he agrees, of course?

RHODA

I think he will.

VAUX

Yes, a year or so in Spain and — Tom will paint!

RHODA

(*She turns sharply at mention of "Tom," but does not answer*)

VAUX

Have you told him your — plans?

RHODA (*dubiously*)

Tom? No! Not all —

VAUX

I'll tell him just where to go — the very inn. — I'm sure it's still there. — They don't tear down in that country. — And I told them I'd be back some day —

RHODA

On *your* honey-moon?

VAUX (*laughing assent*)

Yes, I s'pose I told them that — I was young — and — in — Spain, somehow — you're always thinking of — honey-moons —

RHODA

Yes! — Miss Gray says you can make love better in Spanish than any other language.

VAUX

Has she been there?

RHODA

I guess so: she's a singer. — Rooms next to me, at Varrick Court. (*Vaux notes the tune — a spirited Spanish waltz — that Rhoda is playing on the guitar*)

VAUX

What's that you're playing?

RHODA

I don't know: hasn't any name.

VAUX

Where d'you hear it?

RHODA

In Spain! — One night, at an inn, I was dining — and in the court-yard below there was a dance — to this tune. Wonderful ladies, dressed like Dulcinea — and gentlemen that looked like Don

Quixote — and you, Mr. Vaux. I've never forgotten it.

VAUX (*amazed*)

When on earth were you in Spain, child?

RHODA

Often! — Whenever I get *that* — (*Indicates the dress and mantilla on the dummy*) — next my bones — and sit here, while you work — and you tell me he's — (*Indicates Quixote*) — so “dotty” about me — I just *have* to plunk this tune. (*Her playing gradually softens into silence*) (*The clock-chimes strike the hour*) (*The windows rattle: Vaux goes to window: looks out cautiously*)

VAUX

H'm — Getting worse, the snow! — You couldn't get through — Miss Brough — (*She doesn't answer*) Rhoda! (*Vaux crosses, on tiptoe, and sees that she's fallen asleep: takes guitar, carefully, from her hand: puts a robe over her knees: dims the lights, except one under which he sits to read: rises, after a second or two, and listens at the door: then peers out the window. — Takes a sudden resolve — puts on storm-coat and hat: makes to go, but turns and crosses to desk; sits down and writes a line or two, quickly*) (*While he is writing, Rhoda is seen, for an instant, peering stealthily through the French window, at back. Vaux, vaguely uneasy, pauses in his writing, as if to listen. Then, reassured, continues: takes a key from his key-chain and is putting it in envelope, with the note, as the curtain falls*)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

The scene is Rhoda's room in the mansard of "Var-rick Court"—a shabby, old mansion tenanted by artists, writers, musicians, etc.

The room, of fair size, shows at a glance that it is the habitat of a person of artistic taste and ingenuity: an example of what may be accomplished by such qualities working with the most inexpensive materials. The color-scheme may be whichever best fits the actress playing Rhoda: but there is nowhere a discordant note. On the walls are some unframed paintings—"studies," etc., such as a model might receive as gifts, or, in lieu of money, from artists for whom she poses. Conspicuous, is the large photograph of a "showy"-looking man, wearing a fur-coat: and a soft-toned lithograph of the same man in prize-ring costume.

The furniture includes a writing desk: book-shelves on the walls: a dressing-table, with shaded candles, etc. The tiny bed stands in an alcove, in which there is a window, with a glimpse of the sky and stars. There is a fire-place with mantel at left: above the fire-place a window: below, a door leads to adjoining rooms—Marian Gray's. A door at back opens to the hall of the building.

At rise of curtain Savile, Tom's father, hat and overcoat on, is walking about, examining the room—the furniture, pictures, etc. Tom, seated right, is glanc-

ing through a folio of four or five type-written pages, of the usual "legal" size.

From the adjoining room is heard, at intervals, a good voice running the musical scale.

SAVILE (*admiring various "studies," "sketches," etc., and reading the superscriptions*)

"To my model of models — from Paul Helleu" —

"Self-portrait of Quixote, to Dulcinea" — Vaux, of course?

TOM (*without looking up from his reading*) That was his first "study" — for the statue.

SAVILE

Quite a mark of devotion! — (*Before another drawing*) "Rhoda, in her new pagoda — Gifford Beale" — Some of these pictures I wouldn't mind having on my walls.

TOM

Pose for the artists, and you can get them — just as Rhoda does — in lieu of cash.

SAVILE (*As he looks about suspiciously*)

Rather smart quarters for the "poor, working girl"!

TOM (*without looking-up from the pages*)

Just because you're poor, you don't have to have your rooms disfigured by Fifth Avenue decorators.

SAVILE (*surveying the dainty dressing-table*)

This dressing-table, I should say, came from one of them.

TOM

Possibly — from his back-yard. (*Rises, and lifts the covering of table to disclose a pine packing-box*)

SAVILE (*indicating canopied bed in curtained alcove*)

That four-poster, I s'pose, is an heir-loom?

TOM (*laughing*)

It *will* be before the instalments are all paid.— I know what's in your mind, dad,— if you believe this stuff! (*Holds up the "report"*)

SAVILE

You don't believe it?

TOM

Not a word!

SAVILE

Indeed?

TOM

Not one damn word of it!

SAVILE

Your language!

TOM

Doesn't fit the case! You'll say so yourself, the moment you see this girl, and speak with her.

SAVILE

I'm quite willing to be convinced. That's what I'm here for.— And I expect you to be equally reasonable — or I'm done with you!

TOM (*genially*)

Don't talk like that, please! — Come, be the regular dad you were, 'till this thing came up.— Now you're the regulation irate parent in a melodrama. — Who is this, anyway — who makes this report?

SAVILE

Reliable man — often employed by our organized charities.

TOM

Oh! — One of those fifty-fifty boys!

SAVILE

What's that: "fifty-fifty"?

TOM

Well, you know, dad, of every two dollars given for "organized charity," fifty cents goes to charity, and one-dollar fifty to "organization."—Your man's the dollar-fifty end.

SAVILE

Not this one! They pay him — well — from a special fund — for confidential work.

TOM

Not a detective, dad? (*Savile doesn't answer*) He hasn't been — "trailing" — Rhoda?

SAVILE

Certainly not!

TOM (*unconvinced*)

'Cause if it were anything like that — and becomes known, I *am* done for! — I couldn't live down here.

SAVILE

Are they all crazy as Vaux?

TOM (*nods "yes"*)

When it comes to a girl like Rhoda Brough — most all of them! — Of course, some "rotter" shows up, now and then, who thinks any girl's fair game; but he soon gets lonely — and moves on. — Tear this up! (*Starts to tear the "report," but Savile seizes it from him*) Drop the whole miserable business. — I wouldn't dare show that to Rhoda!

SAVILE

What are you 'fraid of? — You want this to go un-denied? — That wouldn't be fair to the girl.

TOM

No!—But why does he bring this stuff to *you*?
How'd he know *you're* interested — in Rhoda?

SAVILE (*indifferently*)

O, these men find out everything: that's their business — to get at the truth!

TOM

No more chance of this being true of Rhoda *than* of your own daughter.

SAVILE (*angrily*)

I don't like the comparison — with *this* man's — (*Indicates picture of prize-fighter*) — daughter. (*A voice in adjoining room calls*) "Rhoda! Rhoda!!" (*Trilling the name through the musical scale*) (*The door opens: Marian Gray appears in door-way*) (*Marian is a few years older than Rhoda: about twenty-two or twenty-three years old. She is rather tall: hair and eyes dark — the latter brilliant. The pink of pomegranate shows through her dark skin: her mouth — a cupid's-bow — is inviting; altogether, a sparkling beauty, with features of so-styled "aristocratic" mould. Her manner and bearing are in accord with her appearance; her voice, low and soft: her utterance clean-cut, well-bred; so that a "cuss-word" — a "hell" or "damn" — from her lips is like a bolt-from-the-blue. All the more so, since she seems quite innocent of any intent to shock or offend*) (*She wears an evening gown; the waist of which is not completely hooked-up, and she holds it together at back*)

MARIAN (*she speaks very low, almost a whisper,*

throughout the scene, until otherwise indicated in the directions)

Hook me up, dear! — (*At sight of others*) I beg your pardon — I thought Miss Brough was in.

SAVILE

We're waiting for Miss Brough.—

MARIAN

But that door was locked. How'd you get in?

SAVILE

The landlady let us in.

MARIAN

Well, that lets you out! (*Nods to door, as if to dismiss them*) Please wait below, till Miss Brough returns. She said to admit no one.

TOM

I'm sure she wouldn't mind us.

MARIAN

But *I* do! — 'Cause I promised no one should get in. No one! — No one! ! — No one! ! ! — So won't you please leave! — before I ask you to go!

SAVILE (*out-of-patience*)

My dear young woman, I own this building — and I may enter any room I please, any hour of the day or night.

MARIAN

Well, don't you please enter *my* room, any hour of the day or night!

SAVILE

I have the right, Miss, under the law.

MARIAN (*laughing*)

O, the devil take your law! —

SAVILE (*horrified*)

What!

MARIAN (*seriously*)

Yes! — And *your* law it is, I'm sure: made *for* you and *by* you — and unmade when it suits your purpose. — Or you wouldn't be stopping in strange rooms when you're politely requested to leave.

SAVILE

But, see here —

MARIAN (*with stamp of foot*)

You *must* go! — And don't make me talk out — 'cause I must sing to-night —

SAVILE

Yes, but we —

MARIAN (*interrupting, in loud tone*)

Now, won't you please get the hell out of here!

TOM (*enlightened by the cuss-word, which is uttered quite simply and amiably*)

O, this is Miss Gray, isn't it?

MARIAN

Yes!

TOM (*to Savile*)

Close friend of Miss Brough.

MARIAN

Next-door-neighbor!

SAVILE

Congenial, evidently.

TOM

I guess you don't know who I am.

MARIAN

O, yes! You're the chap wants to marry her.

SAVILE

Oh! She speaks about it?

MARIAN

No! — She speaks *of* it: Mr. Watts speaks *about* it.

TOM

It's no secret, that I hope to marry Miss Brough.

MARIAN

Well, that's the last man a girl wants snooping around her rooms, without warning. (*Closes and locks Rhoda's writing-desk*)

SAVILE (*sitting down*)

I'm sorry you think us presumptuous —

MARIAN

“Presumptuous”! No indeed! Just nervy! — You've no right here. — They had no business to let you in — while Miss Brough is away. —

TOM (*to Savile*)

She's right. Come along! (*Puts hand on Savile's shoulder urgingly: Savile turns away impatiently*)

MARIAN (*stamps her foot, in rage*)

At once — you go! — or I'll call the — (*Opens door and confronts Homans*)

HOMANS (*entering*)

Thank you! — (*To the others*) I was to meet a Mr. — (*Looks at card, as if uncertain*) — Savile — here.

SAVILE

I'm Mr. Savile: — (*Indicating Tom*) — my son.

HOMANS

Homans' my name. — (*Glances at Marian*) — But *this* isn't the girl.

SAVILE

Friend of hers — next room.

HOMANS (*looking Marian over*)

H'm! — Model, I s'pose?

TOM (*sharply*)

Miss Gray sings.

HOMANS

Chorus or cabaret?

MARIAN (*rather bewildered and frightened by Homans' impudence*)

Church-choir, mainly.

HOMANS (*laughing, and with some admiration*)

Well, that's a new one! — church-choir! — I meet all kinds of Lu-lus, but you're the first — hallelujah!

MARIAN (*in a fury*)

Why, you d-d-despicable —!

HOMANS (*unmoved*)

Run along, Maisie —

TOM (*urging*)

Please, Miss Gray —

SAVILE (*with gesture of dismissal*)

Yes, we've business here.

MARIAN

No, you *haven't* any business here! — (*To Tom*) I've only *heard* about you; but I've never liked you. — For no reason that I could see — (*Glares at Savile*) — till *now!* (*Makes to go, but turns to take Rhoda's fur-coat, from behind wall-curtain. Exits to her room, whence she is heard, immediately, singing the scale*) (*An auto-horn signals, in answer, in the street below*)

HOMANS (*still amused*)

“Church-choir”! — With her own limousine (*Indicating the auto-horn*) — at the door. — Isn’t that enough?

TOM (*laughing*)

Scarcely.

SAVILE (*rather to Tom*)

Birds of a feather!

HOMANS (*taking-in the attractive room*)

Fine feathers, ’specially. — But they don’t usually flock so high up. Street-floor’s handier: — ’specially, just off the Avenue.

SAVILE

Mr. — Holmes —?

HOMANS (*correcting*)

Homans!

SAVILE

The young man doesn’t believe this. — (*Taps report*)

HOMANS

They never do! — The old ones, neither. And we never give arguments: just facts.

TOM

I’d want more than your word — that they’re facts.

HOMANS

There’s the man who saw the whole affair.

SAVILE

Could you get him now?

HOMANS (*dubiously, as he looks at his watch*)

He’ll be on beat, soon.

TOM

Policeman? (*To Savile*) You’d not bring him — before Rhoda?

SAVILE

You insist on proof!

HOMANS

He has the warrant.

TOM (*looks to Savile horrified*)

"Warrant"? Good God!—is that what we are here for?

HOMANS (*appeasingly*)

A warrant's nothing, till it's served.—He's had it some days, but I got him to hold off, in case the girl wanted to leave town.

SAVILE

Very decent!

HOMANS (*airily*)

We always give 'em a chance to get away—and start over—somewhere they ain't known. (*With a wink*)

TOM

Miss Brough "aint known" here!

HOMANS

No; hers is the quiet game. Took slick work "trailing" her.

TOM (*after a sharp glance at Savile*)

Then you have been "trailing" her?

HOMANS (*warned by frown from Savile*)

Not *her* 'specially: all óf 'em, 'round here.

SAVILE (*suggesting*)

Church work?

HOMANS (*confidentially*)

And real-estate—'tween us gentlemen.—They're toning-up this section—just off the Avenue.—

They've drove out the "sweaters": now it's the "skirts."

SAVILE

The —?

HOMANS (*indicating the "report"*)

The "hello-dearies." (*Vaux appears at door, left, in season to hear*)

SAVILE (*disconcerted*)

What brings you, Vaux?

VAUX

Miss Gray's car, brought me.— But if I'm intruding —

SAVILE (*troubled*)

Well — yes — we would prefer — (*Gestures dismissal*)

HOMANS

No, no, let him stay; — he's in this.

TOM

Rather! (*Hands Vaux the report*)

VAUX (*reading*)

"Report on one Jane Doe: in Confidence"— I've no right to the lady's confidence. (*Makes to put down the report*)

HOMANS

There's nothing there you don't know — 'bout that "lady."

TOM

It's Rhoda.

VAUX

Rhoda — "Jane Doe"?

HOMANS

That's in case her real name isn't Rhoda Brough.

SAVILE (*nodding approval*)

And if the charge is dropped there's nothing on record 'gainst her.

VAUX (*looks from one to another, as if dazed, bewildered, helpless*)

Miss Brough hasn't seen this? (*Glances at it*)

SAVILE

No! that's what we're here for: to give her a chance to disprove his — (*Indicates Homans*) — facts.

VAUX

His — facts? (*Loses all concern in the document*)

SAVILE (*insisting*) (*To Homans*)

What you'd tell in Court?

VAUX (*shows renewed interest in the report*)

HOMANS (*nods "yes"*)

Under oath!

VAUX

(*Promptly throws the document aside: wipes his hands on 'kerchief*)

HOMANS (*to Savile*)

One born every minute! (*To Vaux and Tom*)
Take it from a friend — you're a couple of monkeys!
There's some excuse for the boy, but *you* ought to
got wise long ago — just from her 'sociates —
(*Vaux and Tom exchange amused glances*) — com-
pany she keeps. — I've seen her time and again with
a regular — well, a cross 'tween hobo and pugilist.

VAUX

Higgins!

HOMANS

That's the man: you know him?

VAUX

We all know Higgins.— He poses.

HOMANS

Mostly in pool-rooms.

VAUX

Not bad exercise, pool.— I myself play “Kelly.”

HOMANS

“Ponies” he plays — with every dollar he gets his hands on.— And plays ’em for her, too.

VAUX (*assenting*)

When he’s absolutely sure.

SAVILLE (*as if gratified*)

That accounts for the costly coat, you speak of.
(*Indicates the report*)

HOMANS

Some coat, for a girl in her position! — Where’d she get it?

VAUX (*with increasing temper*)

At the furrier’s! — Bought it! — Bought it!!

SAVILLE (*placating*)

Out of what she earns at the shop?

HOMANS

Or picks-up — in studios? Coat worth two or three hundreds! Bought it, eh?

TOM (*tensely*)

How else?

SAVILLE (*to Tom*)

You ask her.

VAUX (*to Tom*)

Hardly!

HOMANS

I’ll ask — how she got a coat — worth hundreds —

(*A latch-key is heard, at door back*) — I'll ask her
— right before you —

VAUX

You will not! — in my presence — question a lady
about her wearing apparel! — (*Rhoda appears in
door-way: utters cry of surprise, starts to withdraw,
but catching sight of Vaux, enters*)

TOM

You mustn't stay here, Rhoda.

SAVILE (*with some temper*)

Why not? — This was your own plan.

TOM

Yes, but I didn't "plan" Homans to be here.

SAVILE

I wanted all this in my office. — Sent her word to
come there.

VAUX

I told her not to.

TOM (*to Rhoda*)

Go in to Miss Gray. Please.

RHODA (*seems not to notice*)

TOM (*to Vaux*)

Tell her to go.

RHODA (*to Vaux*)

Don't! — This is my corner — till they count ten.

HOMANS

To begin with, let her glance over this — (*Offers her
the report*)

VAUX (*quickly*)

No possible interest to Miss Brough.

SAVILE

What!—This *proof* of the charge he's made against —

VAUX (*jumping in*)

“Jane Doe”—'gainst “Jane Doe”! Doesn't concern Miss Brough.

HOMANS (*to Savile, and making to go*)

We're just wasting time —

SAVILE

Vaux, I came here in the kindest spirit toward this unfortunate girl. I mean to help her — for Tom's sake — and yours. And Mr. Homans, I'm sure, feels the same.

HOMANS

Certainly; that's why we haven't pushed the case.

SAVILE

He has shielded your little friend, up to now. But for him the — arrest — would have been made days ago. He's managed to have it held-off — so that she might leave town.

VAUX

That means leaving her employment.

HOMANS

She'll find — “employment” — elsewhere.

SAVILE

And 'til she does, we'll provide for her.— The expense of her journey, we'll provide that, too,— wherever she chooses to go.— The far West — California's pleasant at this season.

RHODA

I don't know any one there.

HOMANS

Oh, you'll soon "pick-up" friends — anywhere.

SAVILE

Go to Europe, if you like —

RHODA

My acquaintance in Europe is even smaller.

SAVILE (*impatient*)

Well, then, anywhere you choose.— I don't care where it is — just so you leave town. You can't stay here.

RHODA

You've decided that?

SAVILE

Only in your interest, Miss Brough.— Tom realizes that. And Mr. Vaux ought to — even better.— He knows how matters stand.

VAUX (*assenting*)

I begin to.

SAVILE

The danger of scandal — disgrace — in these cases.

VAUX

Yes!

SAVILE

Even where the accused is perfectly innocent,— and can prove it — there'll always be doubters and sceptics, to hint and question.— You know what mere gossip can do.

RHODA

It killed that girl! (*Hands Savile a framed photograph*)

SAVILE

Why take the risk? — Go away, quietly — for a time, at least — and no one need ever know of this. — (*Indicates the "report"*) — And you'd best start to-night. — Mr. Homans will arrange that you get away, safely. He'll see you to your train.

TOM

She'd see him to hell first!

SAVILE

That's your advice.

TOM

Yes!

HOMANS

She's too wise to take it.

RHODA

I shall do just what I — I — what Mr. Vaux says I should do! Go or stay?

SAVILE (*to Vaux*)

It shouldn't take long to decide that!

VAUX (*assenting*)

No! — Miss Brough stays!

HOMANS (*to Savile*)

That lets you out, Mr. Savile. You've done all you could for 'em.

SAVILE (*to Tom*)

Now, it's up to the Law.

RHODA

I've nothing to fear — from the Law!

SAVILE (*paternally*)

Have you ever seen the play called "Justice" — that shows how the wheels of the Law, once put in motion — grind on, blindly, relentlessly? Nothing can stop

them — once they're set going. — And very often they grind out strange and unsuspected secrets — so that even the innocent takes on the *appearance* of guilt.

RHODA (*calmly*)

I've no fear, Mr. Savile.

HOMANS

They all sing that song, first off. — She'll change her tune, when she's read that. (*Holds up the report*)

TOM

You know what this man says, Rhoda? That you flirted with him — smiled and spoke to him — on the street. — Of course, you didn't! —

RHODA (*doesn't answer: seems not to hear*)

TOM

He lies, doesn't he?

SAVILE (*protesting*)

Now, Tom, that isn't fair — to Mr. — Bowman. — It's possible, — of course, he was mistaken —

HOMANS

No mistake about it!

VAUX (*to Savile*)

I *hoped* there was!

TOM

No mistake, of course! — Just a plain, deliberate lie! — (*To Rhoda*) Tell him so! — And that will end it!

RHODA (*doesn't answer*)

SAVILE

Have you nothing to say, Miss Brough?

RHODA (*looks straight through him*)

TOM (*to Vaux*)

Make her answer.

SAVILE

Isn't that answer enough? — her silence!

TOM

No!

SAVILE

You want her — before us all — to admit the truth?

TOM

Is it the truth, Rhoda? — Just one word — “No”; that's all I want!

RHODA (*makes no answer*)

SAVILE

You see? — If she won't deny what — Cummins — says — let her explain how the mistake happened. — She'll have to, in Court! She can't keep silent there — or they *will* believe —

TOM

Whatever they like! — It's what I'm to believe, Rhoda.

RHODA

Whatever *you* like!

SAVILE (*triumphant*)

Does that convince you? — Come along! (*Makes to go*)

TOM

No!

HOMANS

Ask her about the pin I wore that night — (*Laughing*) — and haven't worn since. Maybe she'll answer that.

TOM

You will, Rhoda? You must!

VAUX (*horrified*)

Why, Tom Savile —!

RHODA (*protesting*)

Please, Mr. Vaux — he's asking *me*!

TOM

Let him answer, if you won't!

HOMANS

Let Mr. Vaux explain.— Yes! — At least, why she kept away from here, that night.

SAVILE (*pretending surprise*)

Oh! Then she didn't return *here*? — to her own room?

HOMANS

She ran into his place — and stayed there.

TOM

While you were hanging about, of course!

HOMANS

I was “about” — *all night*!

VAUX (*makes a dash for Homans*)

What of that?

HOMANS (*steps back, with his hand on pistol-pocket*)RHODA (*rushes in between*) (*Shrieks to Savile*)

Get him out of here!

SAVILE (*to Homans*) (*Frightened*)

Yes! yes! — Let us go!

HOMANS (*disregarding Savile*)

If he wants “rough-house” — before the lady —

VAUX (*to Rhoda*)

I beg your pardon! — But — (*Turns again to Homans*)

SAVILE (*to Vaux*)

Only make it worse — for her! — and it's bad enough now, God knows!

HOMANS

A *gentleman'd* understand — that it's got to be handled with gloves.

VAUX (*calmed*)

By all means — with gloves! — (*Takes off his gloves*)

RHODA

This sort! (*Holds up a pair of old-time prize-ring gloves*) No tips — all knuckles!

HOMANS (*to Savile and Tom*)

I'm giving you the bare *facts* — 'bout where she stayed that night. — May mean nothing. (*With a smirk*) It was storming; she'd had a bad time of it — and probably didn't want to be alone.

SAVILE

Nothing of that, here — (*Indicates the report*)

HOMANS (*with an air*)

We don't go into their private morals. — If she chose to remain in his rooms — all night —

VAUX

You said she'd "got away" — by the balcony —

HOMANS

We thought she *did*, down the fire-escape — till we looked at the snow — and found no foot-print.

VAUX

H'm! — Sherlock Homans!

HOMANS

Quite simple, Doctor Watson! We watched the

place, front and back, all night: saw just who went in — and who left.

VAUX (*promptly*)

Then you saw *me* leave the house?

HOMANS (*deridingly*)

No! — And I was watching pretty closely.

VAUX

Soon after you left my rooms — I went out.

HOMANS

I didn't notice.

VAUX (*with good-humor*)

Then you weren't watching so closely! — or you'd seen me — lurch 'gainst — some one.

HOMANS

I can believe that — after the drink you took! Goblet full!

VAUX (*insisting*)

Bowled him over, nearly — and he didn't notice!

SAVILE (*making light of it*)

Quite possible: — in the dark — and storm.

VAUX

Yes, there *was* a storm — and one couldn't see clearly. — And there was ice on the walk. — He'd have fallen — man I bumped — only I grasped his hand — firmly — so tight I felt a ring through his glove — felt it distinctly.

HOMANS

Light-fingered, aren't you?

VAUX

Must be, in my job! — Light fingers and wrist of steel. — That's all that saved the fellow from an ugly bump — the quick grab of his hand — like *that*!

(*Seizes Homans' hand*) I was hoping you noticed.

HOMANS

No! (*Shows pain*) I saw nothing of the sort.—I was 'cross the street — when you came out.

VAUX (*jumping in*)

Then I *did* come out? (*Increases pressure on Homans' hand*)

SAVILE

You *say* you did! That's enough!

VAUX

Not for Homans! — And we must *convince* him — beyond shadow of doubt — that I *did* leave my room that night.—

SAVILE

He doesn't deny that — even in this “confidential” report.— He says, now, only that he didn't see you —

VAUX

Though he watched the door, the night through, he didn't see me come out? (*Relaxes grip*)

HOMANS (*re-assured*)

No! — I saw nothing.

SAVILE (*as if that ended the matter*)

There!

VAUX

And though I staggered 'gainst him — (*staggers Homans with a bump of the shoulder*) till he must have seen stars — he saw nothing!

HOMANS

No! — Or if I did, I forget.

VAUX (*smiling grimly*)

Impossible!

SAVILE (*with temper*)

Why "impossible"? — In his day's work, he must encounter many "drunks" — He might easily forget your particular case.

HOMANS

Yes!

VAUX

You might forget, Homans, that I'd bumped 'gainst you. — But if it was *your* hand I'd grasped — like *that* — you'd remember?

HOMANS (*writhing*)

Hell, yes, I'd remember that!

VAUX

Thank you! — Now think, man, *think!* Try to recall, that you *saw* me leave my house: — and that I took hold of you — like this — to keep you from hitting the sidewalk. — (*All the time crushing Homans' hand*) Try to remember!

SAVILE

What of it? What'll that prove?

HOMANS

That it wasn't "street-walking?"

VAUX

No! but that you were mistaken — about my leaving the house: that you've a better memory than you supposed — that it needs only a little — prompting and — pressure! — That's what it proves, doesn't it?

HOMANS (*weakly*)

I guess so.

VAUX

Be *sure*, Homans! — Don't *guess*; — a lady's name's involved. — You're *sure* she passed the night in my

rooms. Now be sure I wasn't there: be quite sure I left the house —

HOMANS (*bent, almost, to his knees*)

Yes! damn you!

VAUX

And it was *your* hand I grasped?

HOMANS (*in final surrender*)

You say so —

SAVILLE (*to Vaux*)

And you'd remember —

HOMANS (*gasping*)

To make his alibi — he'd "remember" — anything.

VAUX

And if *you'd* ever crushed a hand — like this — you'd remember it, wouldn't you?

HOMANS (*fairly yells, from pain*)

Yes! yes!

VAUX (*releasing him*)

Thank you, Mr. Homans. (*Homans is nursing his benumbed, tingling hand, and trying to remove the ring*) (*Vaux re-seizes the hand and holds it up so as to show the ring*) I thought you were the man — when I felt that ring. (*Throws Homans aside, so he nearly topples over*)

HOMANS

You'll feel more rings — before the night's over — (*Gestures hand-cuffs, as he crosses to window*) (*Throws open the window, and signals to some one outside; but in a way scarcely noticeable to the audience; then comes down to Vaux*) (*With threatening gesture*) I — I — You're an old man — and before I'm done, you'll thank your stars for it!

VAUX

I'll do nothing of the sort.

HOMANS (*to Savile*)

As for leaving his rooms — *that* part of their —
alibi — he handled all right —

TOM (*grimly*)

You've proof of that!

HOMANS

— And he went straight back — (*The policeman enters in season to hear*) — to the little lady! — We'll prove *that*, too! (*Rhoda gasps in consternation: Vaux quite unmoved*) (*To Policeman*) Go ahead! (*Policeman takes warrant from his hat*)

VAUX (*intervening*)

One moment, officer —

HOMANS

You've nothing to say —

VAUX (*as if interceding*)

Only this: You're not quite alone in the world, I suppose? There's some gentle creature, somewhere, who's taught you kindness, sympathy, pity —

HOMANS (*brushes him aside*) (*To Policeman*)

Go on!

VAUX (*continuing*)

— A wife — mother, sweetheart — sister —

HOMANS

We'll leave the ladies out of this! (*Waves his hand*)

VAUX

I thank you. (*Moves to take Homans' hand, which is quickly withdrawn*) (*Crosses to Policeman, as if to take warrant*) Tear it up! Don't serve it!

HOMANS (*quickly intervenes and seizes the warrant*)

POLICEMAN

Too late, sir. (*Turns to go*)

HOMANS (*to Policeman, after a puzzled glance at the warrant*)

Here! — This isn't it!

POLICEMAN

That's what they gave me.

HOMANS

Who — gave you?

POLICEMAN

The Judge, at the Night-Court.

HOMANS

Take it back — and hurry! (*Thrusts warrant at him*) Have it made out right.

POLICEMAN (*not looking at warrant*)

That's right.

HOMANS (*sticks warrant under his eyes*)

Look at the name: is that "Jane Doe"?

POLICEMAN

No! "John Doe."

HOMANS (*with disgust*)

"John Doe"! (*Tries to make policeman take the warrant*)

POLICEMAN (*resisting*)

That's right!

VAUX

In case your *real* name isn't — *Homans!*

HOMANS (*perplexed*)

My name?

POLICEMAN

That's right! — Maybe Homans is only your pro-

fessional name, Judge said. So they put the usual
"John Doe."

HOMANS (*as if amused*)

What is this — some game?

POLICEMAN (*nods "yes"*) (*Seriously*)

And you're it! (*Puts hand on Homans' shoulder*)
(*A slight pause*)

HOMANS

What's the charge?

POLICEMAN

Perjury.

HOMANS

Who makes the complaint?

POLICEMAN (*indicating Vaux*)

This party.

HOMANS

That crazy loon?

VAUX

That's right!

HOMANS

What evidence?

VAUX (*indicating policeman*)

This gentleman.

HOMANS (*staggered, for a second: then, deridingly*)

Policeman's evidence? Doesn't go in court!

VAUX

O, yes — goes with the ring! (*Indicates Homans' ring*)

POLICEMAN (*after a questioning look from Homans*)

That's right! (*Touches the scarf-pin that Homans had given him*)

VAUX (*rather to Savile than Homans*)

The — alibi — the Night-Court will prove.— I sat through the session that night — *all night* — with my friend, the Judge.

POLICEMAN (*to Homans, sotto-voce and triumphant*)

I told you he was no hick!

HOMANS (*with unconscious humor*)

And you told me you went to Confession!

POLICEMAN

That's right! (*Crosses to Vaux*)

SAVILE (*comes down from Vaux, to Homans*)

Nice mess you've made of it!

HOMANS

I'm not to blame! — It's Vaux — and the way you handled him.

SAVILE (*through his teeth*)

Way *I* hand —? — Way he “handled” *you*, did it.

HOMANS (*to Policeman*)

I have *your* number!

VAUX

I haven't, Mr. Officer — but I s'pose we can find you on this beat?

POLICEMAN (*assenting*)

'Till there's another shake-up, down here.— Best take my card. (*Gives Vaux card from fine case: Vaux reads it, with a start: bows ceremoniously to the policeman*)

POLICEMAN (*touches Homans on shoulder, significantly*)

Shall we run along? — Quietly?

HOMANS

Like a lamb!

POLICEMAN (*makes to lead Homans off*)

SAVILE (*intervening*)

No need of that! I'll vouch for his appearance in Court, when called on. (*Looks to Vaux*)

POLICEMAN

That won't do.

SAVILE (*flaring*)

My word isn't enough?

POLICEMAN

Sorry — but — the Commissioner's a crank in cases of this sort.

SAVILE

You've only to mention my name to your Commissioner —

POLICEMAN (*interrupting*)

No good!

VAUX

Mr. Savile's name is good for fifty millions.

POLICEMAN

Not good for sour apples in this case.

SAVILE (*in a rage*)

Why, you ruffian! — I'll see you're taught how to deal with — a gentleman!

POLICEMAN (*with deference*)

You may be, at that, sir. — And I try to be; but our business is 'gainst it — yours and mine — 'cording to my daughter.

SAVILE

What the devil does your daughter know of my —?

POLICEMAN (*placating*)

Not you 'specially: but — well, she says there's only three occupations for a gentleman: the farmer who tills the land, the artist who adorns it, and (*swing-*

ing his club) the soldier who defends it. (*To Homans*) Come along!

VAUX (*intervening*)

You think the Commissioner might take my word — with Mr. Savile's — for this man's appearance in Court?

POLICEMAN (*patting Homans on back*)

I'll risk it! But if the lamb skips, I'm the goat!
(*Exits*)

HOMANS

Don't worry! — I'll be at the post when the bell rings. — (*As he passes Rhoda, to exit*) — The little lady can bet on that.

RHODA (*halts Homans, by hand on his shoulder, so that he must look straight at the prize-fighter's picture*)
My father, Homans! — I'm glad, to-night, he's dead! Or he'd have murder on his soul! (*Laughing, through her tears*) But I like to *think* of what he'd do to you! (*Homans exits*) (*Rhoda is about to topple over: Tom moves to catch her, but she avoids him, and crosses to Vaux*)

RHODA

You told me he — cared for me.

VAUX

Beyond everything else in the world!

RHODA (*laughs, to ridicule the very idea*)

VAUX (*insisting*)

He loves you!

RHODA (*flaring*)

And could *question* me — like that — before *you* — and his father — and that beast of a man! (*Exits to Marian's room, left*)

SAVILE

Stupid blunder of that Homans!

TOM (*explosive*)

“Blunder”?

SAVILE

An honest mistake, I’m sure.—Over-zealous to make a clear case.

VAUX (*grimly*)

He made it!

SAVILE

Awkward, of course, for the girl — and only one way out!

VAUX (*exultant*)

Good! — I knew you’d see it! (*To Tom*) Fetch Miss Brough — (*Tom makes to go, but Savile stops him by a gesture*) (*To Savile*) So you yourself can tell her.

SAVILE

I’ve already told her — how to get out of all this: — get out! — till this blows over —

VAUX

That’s your “one way?”

SAVILE

You know a better?

VAUX

There couldn’t be worse! — Flight is always taken for confession.

SAVILE

You’d rather she go to court — and tell the world — a *sceptical* world — of that night in the street? — And in your rooms, Vaux! — She must tell it all! —

as chief witness against Homans — if she stays here. Now, unless you prefer her society to her reputation, let her get out!

VAUX

She shall! — leave the country — but with Tom!

TOM (*eagerly*)

That's the one way: my wife!

SAVILE

What! — After *this* — mess?

VAUX

Because of it!

SAVILE (*to Tom*)

You'll have it cropping-up the rest of her life!

VAUX

You'll beat it down!

SAVILE

Not with fifty millions!

VAUX

With your position — your family — your home — your name!

SAVILE

They'd only keep the infernal scandal alive and going!

TOM

But you see now it's all a lie! Not one atom of truth, from start to finish! — Some fiendish, damnable mistake — at best — *at best*, father! — You don't question that?

SAVILE

Others will! — They'll always hint — and question — about “young Savile's wife.”

VAUX

That will answer them — *your* son's wife — *silence* them, even before they question.

SAVILE (*with hardly-suppressed impatience*)

You concern yourself a lot over my son — and his —!

VAUX (*assenting*)

I'm responsible for them, in a way — and *to* them. — They met through me; in my house, under my eyes — thrown together — in close companionship.

SAVILE

No closer than *you* and she — but you don't marry her — I notice. — You're not so crazy as all that!

VAUX (*abstractedly and wistfully*)

No! — No! (*Smiling*) And Miss Brough even less.

SAVILE

She'd cut a better figure in Court — as Mrs. Vaux.

VAUX (*with temper*)

Miss Brough will never go to court! — I'll withdraw the charge against Homans.

SAVILE (*with pretence of indifference, but actually relieved*)

Can you?

VAUX

Surely! — Or not appear to press the charge. That will end it —

TOM (*eagerly*)

And without scandal, dad, or publicity. — So they can't hint — or question — about "young Savile's wife"!

SAVILLE

Oh? — That's the idea, eh? (*To Vaux*) That's *your* way out?

TOM

And mine! — The way I'm going to take. — And you can't stop me! (*Rushes to exit, left*)

SAVILLE (*to Vaux*)

You'd condone a crime — compound a felony, the Law calls it! — perjure yourself, practically —?

VAUX

Call it what you like: I shan't appear against Homans.

SAVILLE (*in rage*)

You must — or admit you're a humbug! And all your roar and fire about chivalry just — punk! — If Homans is the scamp you say, see he's punished — for the sake of other women. — Don't give all your chivalry to Miss Brough! — and make me pay for it — with "my position — family — name"! — I'd see you damned first — the whole pagan lot of you! — You started this, Vaux! and you'll see it through — to the end — or I'll know how to make you —

VAUX

But you won't? You'll not go that far?

SAVILLE

If need be — I'll go to hell and back.

VAUX (*in friendly spirit*)

Don't come back — Stay there! — if you drag that girl into court, you'd find Hell cooler than New York.

SAVILE (*deridingly*)

Bah! — (*Makes to go*) What can she do — or you?

VAUX (*hopelessly*)

Nothing! — Nothing! — You're Tom's father — We can do nothing! (*Looks toward Marian's room*) (*Takes up hat, gloves, to go*) (*With change to tone of ominous assurance*) But, Savile — (*Beckons him; Savile comes down*) (*Repeats the words and tone Savile used to Rhoda*) — the wheels of the Law — once set in motion —

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

Two months later.

Same as Act I.

The time is evening of a Spring day. The light advances slowly from the last of the sunlight to twilight and dusk; then to the pale silver of the new moon.

At rise of curtain Higgins is clearing various articles out of the studio; some he tosses into the room at left: others — costumes of models, sculptor's tools, studio "props," etc.— he throws in an antique chest; articles of apparel, hats, shoes, old coats, etc., he makes into a bundle to carry off. From time to time, as he picks up some well remembered costume or some "props" associated with the statue, he sniffles and throws them into the discard with a mumbled "Crime"—It's a crime!"

A knock at the door; Higgins crosses and opens.

SAVILE (*entering gruffly*)

Is he in?

HIGGINS

No, sir.—He's gone to fetch Miss Brough.—You may find him over at the Lafayette — having an ice and some — pâtisserie.

SAVILE (*looking about*)

H'm! — Must have sold something!

HIGGINS

Some of his old-clothes, maybe.— Never heard of your son selling a *picture*!

SAVILE (*turns sharply*)

Mr. Vaux, I'm asking for. I want to see *him*.

HIGGINS

I'm not sure if he's in — and, anyway, he's with a gentleman. (*Nods off*)

SAVILE (*in low voice*)

Find out! (*Higgins moves up to alcove, the curtains of which are drawn*)

VAUX (*entering from alcove*)

Mr. Savile. (*Signs Higgins to go*)

SAVILE (*hands Vaux letter in official-looking envelope*)

Who's that from?

VAUX (*indicating print on envelope*)

Police-headquarters, evidently.

SAVILE

Request — rather peremptory — to confer here with one of the Department. Your friend — the policeman?

VAUX

Most likely. (*Enter from alcove, the Policeman: now, apparently, a man-of-fashion; his morning coat, trousers of dark stripe, patent leathers, top hat, light gloves, all of the best mode*) (*To Savile, presenting the Policeman*) You've met before — you gentlemen?

SAVILE

I don't recall the — *gentleman* — unless, possibly — (*Looking Policeman over*) you've changed your tailor.

POLICEMAN

That's right.

SAVILE

H'm — yes. Now I recognize you.— But — quick promotion, isn't it — from the side-walk?

POLICEMAN

I was on special duty on that occasion. And merely as substitute. I'm, regularly, on desk-work.— There'd been trouble in this precinct as you may know —

SEVILE (*impatiently*)

Only from the newspapers.

POLICEMAN (*continuing*)

And it was necessary to learn — the truth — at first hand.

SAVILE

Yes, I've read about your freak Commissioner — how he sometimes “pounds the sidewalk,” himself.

POLICEMAN (*assenting*)

To see just what's going-on — with his own eyes.

SAVILE

Like the Sultan of Bagdad — Haroun-Al-Raschid?

POLICEMAN (*assenting*)

And Mr. Roosevelt — when he was Commissioner.

SAVILE

For so small a case you folks took a lot of trouble — to get at the bottom.

POLICEMAN

It's more trouble to get at the top in these cases; — to reach the men of influence, wealth, power, who corrupt the force for some wretched purpose of their own.— The force, as a whole, is sound: no finer body of men in the world. But there are some weak members, of course, and if the opal-pin

is big enough, and the man back of it, big enough — why, your own daughter, Mr. Savile, might undergo just what Homans planned for Miss Brough.

SAVILE

The only plan — (*to Vaux*) you heard Homans — was a clean-up of the district.

POLICEMAN (*assenting*)

And, to his sort, a clean-up means “pick-up” — and if that fails, “frame up.” — And back of him, usually — that’s what roils us! — is some one we can’t “send-up.”

SAVILE (*with ill-suppressed chuckle*)

Can’t prove your case, eh? — Haven’t the evidence to convict?

POLICEMAN

Oh, yes, plenty evidence to convict — before any jury we can keep an eye on — and any judge he can’t get his hands on.

SAVILE

But, of course, if he’s rich and powerful — big man, as you say — he appeals the case, straight up the line?

POLICEMAN

That’s right! — And somewhere “up the line” he’s sure to find a judge of his own making, or his friends’: a judge the press and public can’t keep an eye on, because he works behind the silken screen of ancient dignities, authority and cunning technicalities. In the end — we see it right along in these cases — the Big Man is scot-free — “vindicated!” — He twiddles his fingers at the Law: the decent fellows on the force shrug their shoulders with a

“what’s-the-use?” — Why, sir, a case of this sort — “small,” you call it — does more to discredit authority, demoralize order, than I. W. W.’s, or sputtering, soap-box Anarchists or even Labor driven to desperate remedies. They’re not the real menace to the community. They fight in the open: boldly and frankly defy the Law. It’s the other sort that beats us — the Big Man, who works underground — *undermines* the Law —

SAVILE (*rising, impatiently*)

What are you driving at? — I came here to meet a policeman — to hear some facts — not a Cooper-Union lecture!

POLICEMAN

You’re quite right, sir.— I am a bit of a bore on the subject of the Department — and scamps like Homans.

SAVILE

What’ll he get? — Homans?

POLICEMAN

You know what he ought to get?

SAVILE (*sullenly*)

Yes — for his — stupidity!

POLICEMAN

And he’ll get it — if you say the word.

SAVILE

If I —?

POLICEMAN (*nods “yes”*)

It’s up to you, Mr. Savile.

SAVILE

“Up to me”? What the devil have I to do with it?

POLICEMAN

Homans can't be tried without the evidence of Miss Brough.

SAVILE

What's that to me?

POLICEMAN

Your son's fiancée?

VAUX (*quickly*)

And before the case comes to trial — your daughter-in-law.

POLICEMAN

Now, of course, if you're willing that young Mrs. Savile should figure in the case —

SAVILE

Perfectly willing! Why not?

POLICEMAN

Well, it's an ugly story. And ugly questions will be asked —

SAVILE

What questions?

POLICEMAN

Oh, you can't foretell what the law may grind out, once you set the wheels going — 'gainst a hawk like Homans —

SAVILE

And to spare a lady some awkward questions, you'd free the hawk?

POLICEMAN

That's right!

SAVILE

You say that *is* right?

POLICEMAN

That's for you to say. Shall the hawk go free now his claws are pulled — his wings cut — a brand on him? Or shall we cage the hawk — with the help of young Mrs. Savile?

VAUX (*after a pause*)

What do you say, Savile?

SAVILE (*to Policeman*)

I'll answer that when Miss Brough is young Mrs. Savile.

POLICEMAN

Then I'll have your answer — say — by — (*Looks at his watch*) ten o'clock?

SAVILE (*in a rage*)

To-night?

POLICEMAN

That's right! — Mr. Vaux is leaving town to-morrow, and you must settle this matter before he goes.

SAVILE (*furious*)

Who the hell are you, to order me about — this fashion? — I'll see your Department 'bout this — and at once! (*Makes to go*)

POLICEMAN

I'll take you there. — My car's below.

SAVILE

Is the Commissioner in — at this hour?

POLICEMAN (*with significant smile*)

He *will* be when *I* get there.

SAVILE (*with a grimace of dismay*)

H'm! — The "freak" himself, eh?

POLICEMAN

That's right! (*Exits*)

SAVILE (*with unconscious humor*)

You expect the police to be honest, with a man like that at the head? Ready to condone a felony! A black-mailer — that's what he is — a common black-mailer! Thinks he can frighten me — bully-rag me — because he suspects something!

VAUX

You're wrong, Savile; he *suspects* nothing.

SAVILE

Then what's his talk of my — (*wincing*) — daughter-in-law?

VAUX

I told him Tom was going to marry Miss Brough — 'mediately.

SAVILE

I'm damned if he does! No matter what that black-mailer may think or suspect —

VAUX (*breaking in — reassuringly*)

Nothing! Set your mind at rest. The Commissioner suspects nothing of your part in this business. (*Savile sighs relief*) He *knows*, Savile, he knows everything. Homans has confessed — kept nothing back.

SAVILE

The crook! — The lying crook!

VAUX (*grimly*)

That's right! (*Enter Tom and Rhoda.*) (*There is a slight pause*)

TOM

Dad, Rhoda's waiting to hear you.

SAVILE

I've nothing to say to Miss Brough.

TOM

The Commissioner thinks you have.

SAVILE

Miss Brough, I don't care to quarrel with Tom, on *your* account —

RHODA

No, don't, please. 'Tisn't worth while.

SAVILE

He seems to think I should explain that blunder of Homans —

RHODA

But there's no need to explain; it's all quite clear to my mind.

SAVILE

You understand, of course, how it came about.

RHODA

I think I understand — perfectly.

SAVILE

There were many suspicious circumstances. For one thing — your father.

RHODA

What about "Dad?"

SAVILE

He frequently had trouble with the police.

RHODA (*flaring*)

Never! Never! Police had trouble with *him* — maybe — but —

SAVILE

Well, there's your furs, Miss Brough.

RHODA

My "furs?"

SAVILE

A coat you wear, extraordinary — Homans thought — for a girl in your position — a coat worth, he says,— two — three hundred dollars.

RHODA (*as if astonished*)

Two or three hundred! My coat? When my father wore a fur coat, Mr. Savile, he didn't wear alley-cat, musk-rat, nor Japanese mink. Two or three thousand it's worth — and a lot more — 'cause the fur-man at our shop offered that for it. And my father earned it in one night, God rest his soul! — when he knocked out "Slugger Slavinski" — and he twenty pounds heavier than father — Higgins'll tell you — he saw the fight — and Dad backed himself to win, six-to-one against him — and they having it all fixed to dope father after the eighth round, with a swig of whiskey; but it didn't work 'cause Dad never touched whiskey in a fight — nor anything but champagne — and he won enough that night for the coat — and all his debts — and masses for his parents and some of the neighbors. To me it isn't a — *coat*; it's a — religion! Thank God, Homans didn't know how much it's worth that night he tried to steal my character; he'd have stolen my coat instead.

SAVILE

That was a blunder, I admit — and you're entitled to some decent amend.

VAUX

There's only one — decent amend for such a blunder.

TOM

And I'm the one to make it — or try to.

SAVILE

You try it — and see how you'll live!

TOM

I can do — something — with paint.

SAVILE

You can't *eat* paint — nor clothe yourself with it — though maybe *she* could — And you can't *paint* room-rent —

VAUX (*to Tom, reassuringly*)

The rent-agent is quite sympathetic.

SAVILE

Not mine! — I've bought this building.

VAUX

I congratulate your tenants.

SAVILE

The place will be cleaned-up.

VAUX

Again I congratulate your tenants.

SAVILE

And, from next month, the rent's doubled.

VAUX

I *still* congratulate your tenants; — they'll have to move out.

SAVILE

That's the idea! — to get rid of the — (*Glaring at Rhoda*) riff-raff! (*Exits*)

RHODA

"Riff-raff"! And you were sure he'd consent to your marrying —

TOM

Hang his consent — so long as I have yours!

VAUX

That's the spirit! Now, run along and have it over with!

RHODA (*astonished*)

Now? Now?

TOM

Certainly.

RHODA

I'd want to talk it over, first, with Marian.

TOM

We know what *that* means.

RHODA

I told her I would: — she's been like a sister to me — and made me promise.

TOM

So she could dissuade you. Marian Gray's never liked me —

VAUX

That wouldn't count with Miss Brough — once she's made up her mind.

RHODA

Of course not! — But we couldn't marry like this — to-night!

TOM

Why not? — Mr. Vaux wants us to marry, *now*.
(*Rhoda looks to Vaux who nods "yes"*)

RHODA (*reluctant*)

But there's a lot of things — aren't there? — a license — and — whole rigamarole?

VAUX

It's all been attended to — license, witness, parson — and the rest of the — rigamarole —

RHODA

Not now! — Wait, Tom.— Later, maybe, when I get that awful man out of my mind — (*Hands over eyes as if to shut out the vivid memory*) — and your questions — that night —

TOM

I was a mad-man, Rhoda, to question you; but I forgot everything — except that I loved you.— And when I had to hear that hideous story — that you wouldn't deny — wouldn't even answer —

RHODA (*hands over ears*)

Don't, please, don't!

TOM

Can't you forgive me? (*To Vaux, at window*) Tell her — she must — and forget it all, as I do.— She will, if *you* tell her. (*Rhoda looks at Vaux, questioningly*)

VAUX

Her own heart will tell you, presently.— Go 'cross to the Square! (*Opens wide the window: one hears chirping birds, shouts of children, and a hand-organ*) Don't lose this new Spring day — with the trees just budding, and the flowers in bloom — and the “kids” dancing to the hand-organ — and the birds, too! (*To Rhoda*) See how they forget — the birds and flowers and trees — they've forgotten there ever were clouds and storms and killing snows of winter.— And so will you!

TOM

Come along, Rhoda.

RHODA (*to Vaux*)

And you, too!

VAUX

No, I've some things to 'tend to.—(*To Tom*) After, take Miss Brough to dinner — really dinner, no table d'hôte! — And see a jolly play — and walk home in the moonlight.— This lady's never herself,— her best self — I 'magine, except in the moonlight. Put this on — the evenings are chilly. (*He helps her into the Spanish coat she wore when posing for Dulcinea*)

RHODA

Do come with us!

TOM (*protesting*)

He can't, he says.

RHODA (*insisting*)

Can't you, *really*? — Please, Mr. Vaux!

VAUX

Be off, you humbug!

RHODA

Very well, then.—(*Makes to exit: turns*) O — here's the key. (*Puts it on table*)

VAUX

Thanks.— And, on your way out, knock at Watts' door.— Say I'd like to see him.

RHODA (*turning at door*)

You'll be in, later?

VAUX (*evasively*)

If not, I'll leave the key under the mat.

RHODA

Don't forget! (*Exits*)

VAUX (*alone*) (*with a wistful smile*)

“Don't forget”! I *must* — forget — or I'd — With her goes the very breath of the place — (*Begins to clear out desk: throws letters, papers, pic-*

tures into the fire-place, etc.) I can't live here — without her — with all these things to remind me.— Every time that knob turns I'd —! (*The door opens; he turns with joyous expectancy as if to Rhoda, but sees, instead, Watts*)

VAUX (*in tone that tries vainly to conceal his disappointment*)

O, it's *you*, Watts!

WATTS (*peevd*)

They said you wished to see me.— Evidently a mistake — (*Turns to go*)

VAUX

No, no — I did want to see you — But you're going out — in war-paint — (*Indicates Watts' evening clothes*)

WATTS (*airily*)

Nothing 'special: just dining.— I can't stand day-clothes after six!— What's up?

VAUX

It's about the "Royal Sneeze" gentleman —

WATTS (*delighted*)

Griggs? — Good!

VAUX

Do you suppose he's lost interest in my "Quixote"?

WATTS

"Lost interest"?— He's lost *weight*, over it! Pining away for it!

VAUX (*alarmed*)

You think he'd take it?

WATTS

He'd cart it away himself — to-night.

VAUX (*shaking his head sorrowfully*)

H'm — h'm — h'm! Bad as that, eh?

WATTS

It's got into his blood — his *advertising* blood — and you know what that means.

VAUX (*ruefully*)

Yes, and I'm very happy.

WATTS

You don't look it! — Buck up! — Griggs is always talking of it.

VAUX

You haven't said anything lately — *warned* me, in any way,— and — (*Brightening*) — I thought, maybe, he'd given it up.— (*Relapsing into melancholy*) But it seems not, eh? He won't back out?

WATTS

No! And you shan't, either!

VAUX (*with forced gaiety*)

No, no, of course not! — I'm quite resolved — and resigned — to let him have it.— And I'm going to be very gay over it! — It's a stroke of luck — in the nick of time — and I've every reason to be grateful to Heaven — and to you — and Griggs — and his five-cent cigar.— Ha — ha — ha!

WATTS (*laughing with him*)

That's the spirit! Vive-la-bagatelle!

VAUX

No — vive-la-cachuca!

WATTS

Forget that!

VAUX

I shall — when I'm away from here.— And I'm go-

ing, Watts, the moment this business is arranged —
I'm off!

WATTS (*amazed*)

Where?

VAUX

I don't know — but somewhere a long way off. —
And I'll be gone a long time — and I mean to travel
foot-free and care-free. I'll take with me nothing —
almost — except what's on my back. — Higgins will
take what clothes he wants; — give the rest to Jake,
the janitor — and the furniture to Jake's wife — so
I'll never see them again!

WATTS

My dear Vaux, you're going to stay here, with us!

VAUX

No, no, no! I couldn't be here while that's going on.
— So I'm running away. — It's cowardly, I know,
but I couldn't stand it, Watts, to see the child of my
heart in every barroom: and tobacco-booth where
they drug their patrons with trading-stamps: in the
five-cent shops, my "Don Quixote" cheek-by-jowl
with "Jeff and Mutt" and "Kewpie" and "Billi-
kens" — and all to advertise their "Cachuca"! —
That, perhaps, I could endure, but the thought of the
wives, sweethearts, mothers — orphans, maybe —
who'd have to suffer the fumes of the thing! — And
no escape for them — you heard Griggs threaten —
they'd sell 'em by millions! — And I'll have 'em on
my conscience!

WATTS

O, it isn't so hopeless!

VAUX

No, I have one lingering hope: — the more they advertise Don Quixote, the less cigars they'll sell!

WATTS

Put that out of your mind!

VAUX

Never, Watts! — Mary, Queen of Scots, said when she died they'd find "Calais" written on her heart. On *mine*, good friend, you'll find "Cachuca"!

WATTS (*alarmed*)

My dear, good, friend. — You're not yourself!

VAUX (*reassuringly*)

Quite! Quite!

WATTS

Hell, no! — You're burned out — with this work —

VAUX (*laughing lightly*)

Nonsense! I've loved it!

WATTS

That's just it! — You've given it your whole, wondrous heart — and soul — and all your being. — Let me manage this for you. — I'll make Griggs get out a *new* cigar — *ten*-center — name it "Don Quixote" — and your picture on every box!

VAUX (*horrified*)

My dear Watts!

WATTS

See what it's done for me! — Just my portrait indorsing "Royal Sneeze"! — Sold my old novel — "Millions in a Jiffy" — fifty thousand — in three months!

VAUX (*patting him on the back*)

A "best-seller," eh?

WATTS (*ruefully*)

Yes, and as bad as the best of them!

VAUX (*consolingly*)

Well, you'll never have to do it again.

WATTS (*nods "yes," with emphasis*)

Once more! for a place on Long Island! (*Hands him a book showily bound*) There's the book! (*Vaux glances through it*) Publishers fought for it! Will sell — quarter million! — Just what the public want: grounds for divorce in every chapter!

VAUX (*glancing through book*)

And all the "grounds," it seems, in choice location: Fifth Avenue — Palm Beach — Newport —

WATTS (*assenting*)

Dirt with diamond-dust! — That's what they want! — Taradiddles and tiaras!

VAUX

My dear friend, I'm 'fraid your years of struggle, poverty — have left some of their bitterness.

WATTS

No! There was none, ever! in those years of poverty — lived with your own kind! — It's only when you get into that other world, a world without ideals or dreams, hopes or any ambitions beyond stuffing their pocketbook and filling their bellies! — Come on, let's go up where they do it! (*Puts his arm through Vaux's*)

VAUX (*shocked*)

But, my dear Watts! (*Eyes on page*) Here's "damn" — "hell" — blankety — blank — damn — dash —

WATTS

“Blank ”—“dash ”—nothing! — Printed in full — all over the place! That’s the fashion!

VAUX

But swearing’s out-of-fashion — damn it! — everywhere — except beer-cellars!

WATTS (*assenting*)

Beer-cellars and best-sellers! — You must stick ’em in — “damns ” and “hells ” — thick as raisins! — Then they say your work has “stuff ”! — “punch ”!! — “guts ” !!!

VAUX (*sardonic*)

The top-note of praise, eh? —

WATTS

They’ll say it of your Quixote!

VAUX (*horrified*)

That he has gu — gullets? — giblets? — gizzards? (*Angrily*) Then I’ll not sell — (*Change to tone of hopeless despair*) Yes! Must! — must! — And you shan’t talk me out of it! — Be off! — Get out! (*Pointing to statue*) He’s doomed!

WATTS

But not to Griggs! — Some one else will — (*Struck by an idea*) By Jove, I will — I’ll buy it!

VAUX (*chaffingly*)

For Central Park?

WATTS

What! ’mong those cast-iron “Prince-Alberts”? (*Postures like the much-ridiculed statues in Central Park*) I’ll put it in my own park — my place on Long Island. — Whatever you say, Vaux — and, we’ll

close the deal now — (*Takes huge roll of bills from pocket*) — so Griggs can't tempt you.

VAUX (*refusing*)

Nonsense! — indulge my pride — and vanity — at your expense — (*The clock strikes the quarter-hour*) (*There's a knock at the door. Vaux crosses to open, but stops suddenly: stands a second in troubled thought: then goes up stage and closes the folding-doors of the alcove, so as to shut out view of statue. Stands there, as if on guard*) (*The knock is repeated*)

VAUX (*in low-tone*)

Come!

WATTS (*in loud tone*)

Come in! (*Griggs enters*)

GRIGGS

'Fraid I'm not very prompt, Mr. Vaux —

VAUX (*ruefully*)

Horribly!

GRIGGS

President of our company's in town — from Boston — and when I got your message — to call — (*Watts indicates surprise to find that Vaux sent for Griggs*)

GRIGGS (*continues proudly*)

— I was having tea with him, and his daughter. She rushed me right down here — while you're in the mood, she said: it might change when the moon came up. — And she swears her father must have your — (*Points to alcove*)

VAUX (*bowing*)

Honored!

GRIGGS

She's waiting below, till it's settled —

VAUX (*seeing a way out*)

Then let it go for the present — (*Hands Griggs his hat*) Don't keep a lady waiting — (*Urges him off*) Come back later — next week — or next year.

GRIGGS

Do you mind having her in?

VAUX (*embarrassed*)

Well — I — I — (*Turns up stage, troubled*)

GRIGGS (*sotto-voce to Watts*)

Go fetch her!

WATTS (*gestures unwillingness*)GRIGGS (*insisting*)

I don't dare.— He'd bolt the door — He's wavering now.

WATTS (*aloud*)

Mr. Vaux can't talk business before a lady.

GRIGGS

I'll talk the business — unless you've beat me to it.

VAUX

No, no. Mr. Watts didn't know I'd sent for you.

WATTS

But I've made him an offer —

GRIGGS

What price?

WATTS

His own! (*Exits*)

VAUX

But I've declined it, Mr. Griggs.

GRIGGS

Then you're not hard-up! I hoped — when I got your note —

VAUX (*nods "yes"*)

I have need of money.

GRIGGS

Glad of it — for myself and *you*, too! 'Cause it's going to be a great thing for you, Mr. Vaux — and for — for — your friend there on the horse — I never can get his name just right. — Before I get through, he'll be notorious! — And *you*, too!

VAUX (*with a sigh of despair*)

And the Cachuca!

GRIGGS

Yes, but not the Cachuca you know — and Watts — *used* to know. We've improved it.

VAUX

You could improve it only by — drowning it.

GRIGGS

That's what we've done; destroyed it!

VAUX (*with deep bow*)

I salute you!

GRIGGS (*hands him a cigar*)

There's the new Cachuca — that'll advertise your statue — and it — sizzles!

VAUX

So does the other!

GRIGGS

Yes, but this has "stuff" — "pep" — "punch" — "gu — (*Watts and Marian at door before he can complete the word*)

VAUX (*starts and winces*)

WATTS (*hems and coughs warningly*)

GRIGGS (*presenting*)

President's daughter — Miss Gray.

MARIAN (*greeting Vaux*)

"Marian"—to Mr. Vaux.

VAUX

We're old friends.

GRIGGS (*presenting*)

Mr. Watts — of "The Royal Sneeze."

MARIAN (*with mock distance*)

I recognize him — from the portrait.

GRIGGS (*to Vaux*)

Miss Gray *swears* — (*The others disconcerted*) — by your friend there — (*Nods toward statue*) — Got her father to read your book. — *I* told him the author was a friend of Watts — and why you wouldn't sell us the figger. That started him thinking 'bout "Cre-o-soty" — and it got in his blood, he said, and to get the statue by hook or crook —

VAUX

And this is the — "crook"? (*Scents the cigar, with obvious gratification*) H'm!

GRIGGS

Yes, it's full of pu—

WATTS (*with a wink, or nudge, to Griggs*)

Pu — pure Havana.

GRIGGS

Nothing but!

WATTS (*same business*)

Made by well-paid labor? —

GRIGGS

The best!

WATTS

In good work-rooms?

GRIGGS

Antiseptic! — And sold for near cost — no profit to speak of — except for the enormous sales —

VAUX

But still “ five-cents ”?

GRIGGS

Yes, but “ straight ” — no more “ six for a quarter.”

VAUX

I thank you — in behalf of — (*Throws open the folding-doors showing the now completed statue, gleaming under a flood of brilliant light from above: then stands aside, in attitude of dejection.*)

GRIGGS (*with enthusiasm*)

By Jiminy! — When our President sees that! — *puffing* a Cachuca! (*Turns and notes Vaux's sombre manner*) Say, if the terms I named aren't enough —

VAUX

Too much — now — with so slight a profit in the Cachuca.

GRIGGS

Don't worry 'bout that! — Any extra value we put in the Cachuca, we'll hook out of our Perfectos, and other expensive stuff.

VAUX (*smiling*)

I thought there was a catch — somewhere!

GRIGGS

That's only robbing the wealthy —

WATTS (*coughs warningly*)

GRIGGS (*quickly continues*)

And they're better off, with cigars not so rich and

heavy.— Well, what say? — Shall we call it a *bargain?*

VAUX (*winces at the word*)

I — I — don't know — but — (*To Watts*) — the snuff's working!

MARIAN

Don't decide now, Mr. Vaux.— Think it over — to-night.

VAUX (*twinkling*)

When the moon comes up? (*Touches his brow, significantly*)

GRIGGS

Will you call, 'bout noon, to-morrow — for your cheque? — if it's all right?

VAUX

In that case, Mr. Watts will act for me — if you don't mind.— I'll be leaving town, early.

GRIGGS

To celebrate, eh? — Well, you artist-chaps know how to do it when you have the price.— Palm Beach, I s'pose.

VAUX

Possibly — or California —

GRIGGS

Well, at the Royal Ponciana — or Coronada — Del Monte — or any of those swell places, you can do me a good turn.

VAUX

Honored!

GRIGGS

Just ask for the Cachuca.— And ask loud! — (*Exits.*)

VAUX (*to Watts*)

When I've thought this over, I may become insane —
“that way” — (*Watts nods understandingly.*)

MARIAN (*to Watts*)

I'll run along.— You'll join me later? —

VAUX

Stay, Miss Gray, if you will.— (*Lightly*) — This may be my last will and testament — and there should be a witness — (*To Watts*) Part of that cheque — a quarter, say — you would send to me — to an address you'll get later. A trifle, say \$600 — I'd like Higgins to have, in monthly instalments.— But see you don't pay it to him on race-days.— And thirty, a month — give him, extra — for Cosie. (*Writes on slip of paper, or card*)

WATTS (*sceptical*)

Much chance for Cosie! He starves his wife!

VAUX

Yes, but — Higgins is gentleman, when it comes to a horse! — The rest you'll please put in the bank to the credit of — (*Gives Watts the card*) — that name.

WATTS (*suspiciously*)

What for?

VAUX

He knows.

WATTS

Not a gift?

VAUX (“No”)

A loan.— He needs it.

WATTS

Let him “touch” his father.

VAUX

Can't, just now.

WATTS

Why? Is he paralyzed — the old man?

VAUX

Tom's quarreled with his father.

WATTS

Yes, I know, but —

VAUX

In time, of course, that will right itself, but, meanwhile, the boy needs this help in his work — to go abroad, for study and travel —

WATTS (*in mingled amazement and anger*)

And for *that* you'd sell the —? Well, of all the damned, crazy, quixotic notions —

VAUX (*in protest*)

Stop! Stop!

MARIAN (*with affection*)

Of course, he doesn't mean "crazy" —

VAUX (*interrupting*)

"Crazy" if you like! — (*Touches forehead*) But "Quixotic," no! I do this for *self*! *He* never did — for self! I do this for my own happiness.

WATTS (*grimly*)

Yes, you look it!

VAUX

I want Tom to have this money. — He must have it — to marry.

MARIAN

Rhoda?

VAUX

Of course!

MARIAN

When? — when?

VAUX (*looking at his watch*)

Very soon, now — she'll be Tom Savile's wife — if he found the parson at home. (*Goes to window*) And he is in! (*Looks out of window*) The cross is lighted! And presently the bell will ring and we'll know they're at the altar. Come, we'll drink to their happiness. (*Prepares to pour three glasses of cold tea*)

MARIAN (*protesting*)

In cold tea!

WATTS

That's the stuff — for such a marriage!

MARIAN

Well,— (*Makes to go*) — I'll be — (*Turns*) — It's a rotten shame!

VAUX

Shame?

WATTS

Yes, and *that's* on your conscience, too! Rhoda marries him only because you told her to — out of sheer gratitude to *you*!

VAUX

But that's too absurd!

MARIAN

Nothing you advise Rhoda is too absurd.— Why, she'd marry Mr. Watts, if you said so.

WATTS (*peevd*)

Yes, or Higgins — or Jake!

VAUX (*indignant*)

You go too far!

MARIAN

No! He's right! — She'd marry *you*, if you told her to — she's so grateful for what you've done for her. — That's how I first knew she wasn't in love with you. — They don't go together — love and gratitude — like hers. — (*Turns to Watts*) I'm awfully obliged, by the way, for these lovely orchids — (*To Vaux*) — To repay you, she'd sell her soul — or even her fur coat! — That's why she marries Savile! — (*Laughs heartily*) But she'll get even with him — thank God — or I don't know the little lady!

VAUX

I've known her longer than you.

MARIAN

Yes, but I room next to her — and we've talked over young Savile.

VAUX

What's wrong with "young Savile"?

WATTS

Old Savile! — to start with! — Like sire, like son!

VAUX

That holds only with horses — cattle — dogs — swine —

WATTS

That covers the Saviles! — Why, Vaux, you can't know —

VAUX (*turns away, as if refusing to listen further*)

Enough for me that Rhoda loves him!

MARIAN

"Loves" hell! — She *would*, too, if you told her to! — And thought it would make you happy.

VAUX (*sombrely*)

She's made me happy,— as it is.

WATTS (*grimly*)

Yes! Like the Cachuca!— And for this you're ready to sacrifice your ideals — the child-of-your-heart —

MARIAN

He shan't! I'll see he doesn't.

VAUX (*protesting*)

Please, Watts, no more! — You don't understand.

WATTS

No, and never will — how a man who balks at a bad cigar can stand Tom Savile! —

VAUX (*dismissingly*)

If what I ask, annoys you —

WATTS

Of course, not! — But since you *will* do this insane thing, do be sensible about it: give the money to Rhoda.

VAUX (*assenting*)

I've thought of that — a marriage-gift — but — it would embarrass Tom.

WATTS (*through a burst of laughter*)

“Embarrass Tom!” — Good-night!

VAUX

Good-bye — (*Offers hand*)

MARIAN

No, no! (*To Watts*) Bring him with us! — Then to the Concert — (*To Vaux*) I'm going to try Rhoda's song.— You know the tune — (*Plays a few bars on the piano*) Mr. Watts wrote the words.—

WATTS

She has a voice sent straight from Heaven!

MARIAN

Yes — but a hell of a job to make the world believe it!

WATTS (*urging Vaux*)

You must hear —

WATTS

I'd love to — but — no! — I'd only spoil your evening.

WATTS

You'll spoil my life — if you don't come along. — Because I've a presentiment, old friend, a horrid foreboding, that I'm going to ask a lady to marry me! — (*Marian stops playing*) — And she's going to refuse me!

MARIAN (*resumes playing, very softly*)

Serve you right! — after that book! With its oaths and cuss-words on every page. — It's worse than Shakespeare or Theodore Dreiser — Even the heroine — that divine, majestic rotter that you rave about — talks like two pirates.

WATTS

But, my dear, adorable girl, you are divine, majestic — but *you* — “cuss”!

MARIAN

Not when I *sing*! — And *you* shouldn't when you *write*. — You never heard me swear at Carnegie Hall — or even a fashionable musicale — where it might make a hit — give my song — “punch”! My “damns” don't hurt any one but myself, 'cause I only do it 'mong friends — and to express my

feelings. But *you* do it to sell your damned book — and I blush for you!

WATTS

You'll never blush again!

VAUX

That's a pity! (*To Marian*) You do it beautifully.

WATTS (*to Marian*)

My next book'll please you.—It's all planned!— Won't sell enough, by God's Grace, to pay the printer's bill — but will give me back my self-respect — and lose my publisher's!— And you couldn't blush if you tried!

MARIAN (*gestures "no" emphatically*)

I won't even try!

WATTS

Not just now — but some day!

MARIAN (*with coquetry*)

It'll take "some day"— a very long day — and most the night! (*She makes to go, after a good-bye to Vaux*)

WATTS (*at door*)

I'll see you, in the morning, before you go!

VAUX

You won't be up so early.

WATTS (*with a nod toward Marian*)

I'll be up all night! (*Exits, following Marian*)

VAUX (*calling after them, as their chatter and laughter gradually silence*)

Good-bye, merry friends! (*Looking about the room*)

Good-bye, pleasant fancies! (*To the statue*)

Good-bye, sweet memories — (*In a voice between*

tears and frenzy) — for I perceive I am about to —
(*The church-bell starts clanging, merrily*) (*He stares at the statue a few seconds; takes up the mallet and is about to hurl it at the figure when Rhoda enters, agitated, half-tearful*)

RHODA

Mr. Vaux! — Are you mad!

VAUX (*lets fall the mallet*)

Almost!

RHODA

You meant to destroy it?

VAUX

Yes!

RHODA

But you've sold it! — For a wretched cigar!

VAUX

No!

RHODA (*insisting*)

Yes, for that old Cachuca!

VAUX

No, no! For a *new* Cachuca! (*Laughs*) — improved — reformed. — And he — (*Indicates statue*) — did it!

RHODA (*stamps her foot*)

Don't laugh! — You're heart-broke, I know, though you smile as if you hadn't a care in the world.

VAUX

I haven't — now — that I see you — and know you're going to be happy.

RHODA

And that's why you sell it — (*He gestures protest*) — for Tom Savile and me!

VAUX

Nonsense!

RHODA

Yes! Mr. Watts just told me!

VAUX

That's silly of Watts — and selfish — utterly selfish of him — He wants to have a corner on Griggs! — We'll show him! —

RHODA

But not to-night! Wait — 'bout Griggs! — Decide to-morrow!

VAUX

I'll be gone to-morrow.

RHODA

Before you go — an hour or two — and I can manage. — Please give me — time — (*Weeps silently*)

VAUX (*bewildered for a moment*)

What's on your mind, girl?

RHODA

Your "Quixote" — and my coat! — It will bring part, at least, — and the song may help, Marian says — and Mr. Watts will lend me the rest. (*She turns away*)

VAUX (*his voice tremulous with affection*)

Rhoda! — You — you — (*Approaches her: stops, and his voice swerves into a fine pretence of jollity and laughter*) You couldn't live without that coat!

Your very heart would freeze —

RHODA (*as the birds chirp outside*)

The Winter's over.

VAUX (*smilingly*)

But they wear furs in Summer.

RHODA ("no")

Won't be style this Summer — furs. And *never* in Spain, in Summer. — Let me do it — please. — I've always thought — *prayed* — that some day you'd be poor — so poor my coat might be of use. That's why I took such care of it — wouldn't risk it in the snow —

VAUX

Nor even on Higgins' tips —? — But I've given my word to Griggs.

RHODA (*with meaning*)

One can change their mind.

VAUX

That's the sacred right of *your* sex.

RHODA (*assenting*)

Sacred duty, sometimes.

VAUX (*alert to her meaning, and alarmed*)

You haven't changed your mind — 'bout marrying Tom?

RHODA (*after a slight pause*)

No!

VAUX

Where — where is he?

RHODA (*smiling*)

"Waiting at the Church" — for the parson.

VAUX

Then everything's all right?

RHODA

Quite as it should be.

VAUX

I knew — over there — (*Nods toward Square*) — you'd forgive him.

RHODA

Why, of course! — 'Tisn't hard to forgive when you don't much care.

VAUX

But you *do* care?

RHODA (*wearily*)

If you say so, yes, I *do* care — in a way.

VAUX

Not the way you care for Mr. Watts — or Higgins — or me?

RHODA (*promptly*)

No! (*With wistful smile*) I shouldn't say that.—
(*With toss of head*) But I'm not going to marry him — to-night!

VAUX

Why not? — Beautiful night!

RHODA (*with a shrug*)

I'm not in the mood!

VAUX (*with uplifted eye-brows*)

Oh!

RHODA

Well, you have moods, don't you? — And Tom insists it *must* be “now” — to-night — moment the parson gets in — right off the reel! — That's no way!

VAUX (*nods “yes”*)

With *you*, Rhoda — I guess the only way. — And I couldn't start off, to-morrow, with the thought of you here — unprotected, alone. — I suppose I'll simply have to wait — till you *are* in the mood!

RHODA ("no")

Don't wait, Mr. Vaux! I'll do 'most anything you tell me, but don't wait!

VAUX

Then you *have* changed your mind?

RHODA (*promptly, with some temper*)

No! I've not changed my mind! I never had a mind to marry Tom Savile — to-night.— I had *your* mind, Mr. Vaux! That one I *have* changed — for my own.— I always suspected I had one;— but, somehow, you — confused — me, Mr. Vaux, until you sent us to the Square just now — and I heard the birds, and the fountain, and the hand-organ — and I felt, somehow, Tom wasn't the man I wanted to hear them with.— Then I was *sure* of my mind.— And now I wouldn't change back to *yours* — if you talked Tom till Dooms-day!

VAUX

I'll begin when I get back. (*Takes hat, and makes to go*)

RHODA (*intervening*)

You going to fetch Tom?

VAUX

No! To explain to the parson.— He'll think I'm crazy — after my making all the arrangements — for the license, service — and —

RHODA

Take me with you.

VAUX

What for?

RHODA

I'll explain — that I've a headache — or a toothache — or my trousseau isn't ready.

VAUX

He'll think we're all crazy! — You run home — you look tired, Miss Brough; — you've not been yourself lately: — I'll arrange matters — with the parson; tell him you wish to wait — a day or two. —

RHODA (*against the door, barring his way*)

I like the way you dispose of me! — arrange my life for me! — tell me what I wish and don't wish! — who I'm to choose for love, and who for a friend — when I'm to marry and who I must marry — and what I may think and mustn't — as though I had no mind of my own — no heart — no will — no wish!

VAUX

I've tried only to anticipate your will and wish — to guide you, surely, to its fulfilment. — I've sought to divine, and make clear to *you* — what was going on in that dreamy, fantastic, irresponsible little head. — I believed — fondly — but foolishly, it seems — that I was reading your dearest thoughts — as I'd read the simplest English —

RHODA

A girl doesn't always think English. — And she doesn't think as simple as she looks. — If you ever read here — (*Touches her head*) — one dim, tiny thought that I'd marry Tom Savile — you must have read, too, that it was for *you* I did it — only to please you. — I supposed I could, 'til the time came. — Now I know I couldn't marry any man without love — not even you, Mr. Vaux, just to please you!

VAUX

Good Lord, no! Marry without love!

RHODA

You wouldn't want me to?

VAUX (*repels the idea*)

Out of mere affection, tenderness, loyalty!

RHODA

That isn't enough?

VAUX

For your happiness, no! — To be comrades is something: to love and be loved as friend; — but there's a difference — how vast, amazing and beautiful you've yet to learn. — You're so young — so new to life! — And I envy more than any one else in the world, the man you'll some day come to love — as you must love — not only in heart and soul and mind, but in every atom of your splendid, vital, eager youth. That's the love for *your* marriage, Miss Brough! — There should be — for *your* happiness — there must be — (*Hesitates*)

RHODA

Go on, Mr. Vaux! Say it!

VAUX

Affection isn't enough — nor gratitude — nor pity — nor even the *wish* to love! — There must be — how shall I tell you?

RHODA

I know — without you telling! — I've always known — from the first — with you! (*In Spanish*) (*With all her heart and soul*)

A prueba de contraria estoy hecho
De blanda cera y de diamante duro,

Y á las leyes de amor el alma ajusto.
Blando cual es, ó fuerte ofrezco el pecho:
Entallad, ó imprimid lo que os dé gusto,
Que de guardarlo eternamente juro!

VAUX (*bewildered*)

What's that? — What are you saying?

RHODA

What Dulcinea said to *him*. (*Indicates the statue of Quixote*)

VAUX

I don't recall — Say it in English, Miss Brough!
(*Draws near to her*)

RHODA

You can't say it in English!

VAUX (*drawing nearer*)

You can try! (*Seizes her in mad embrace*)

RHODA

I will not, Mr. Vaux. (*Puts her arms about his neck*)

VAUX (*kisses her repeatedly*)

Say it, girl! Say it, Miss Brough!

RHODA (*breathless, between his kisses*)

Give me a chance, Mr. Vaux.

THE END

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